

THROUGH THE YEAR WITH THE POETS.

EDITED BY
OSCAR FAY ADAMS.



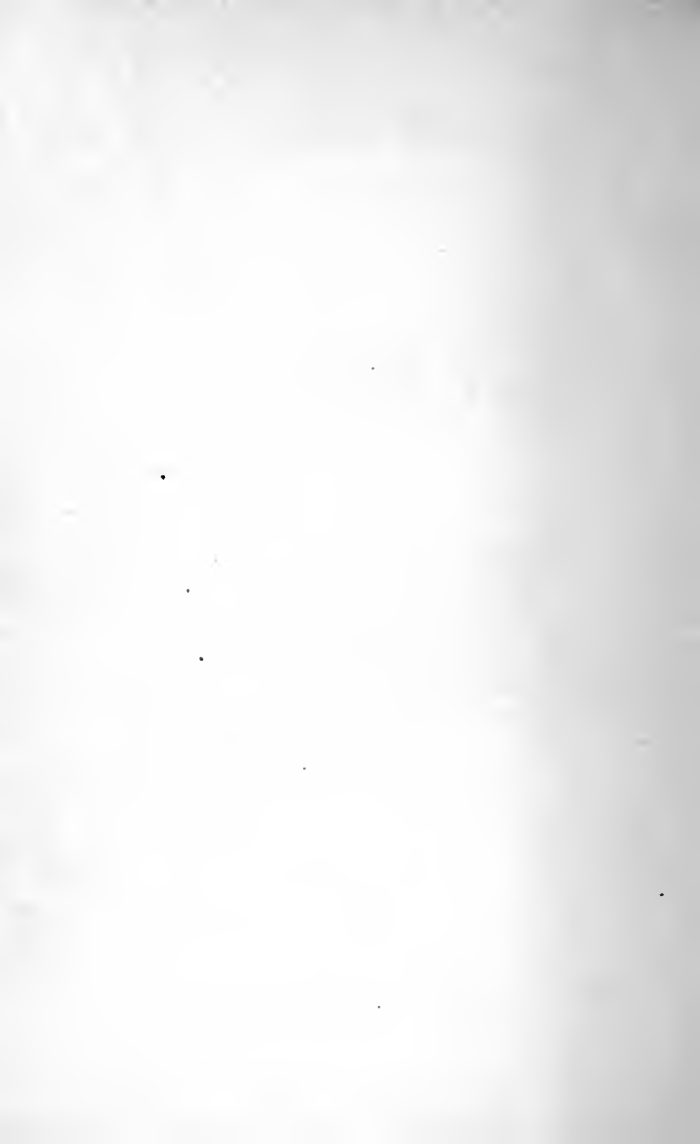
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DECEMBER

EDITED BY

OSCAR FAY ADAMS

LAST of all the shrunk December
Cowled for age, in ashen gray;
Fading like a fading ember,
Last of all the shrunk December.
Him regarding, men remember
Life and joy must pass away.

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON,
Masque of the Months.

BOSTON

D. LOTHROP AND COMPANY

FRANKLIN AND HAWLEY STREETS

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PREFACE.

IN this volume the editor has endeavored to bring together the principal poems in English and American literature referring with more or less directness of allusion to December and the early winter. That the compilation is an exhaustive one he does not claim; but that it does represent, with a reasonable degree of completeness, the poetry of December, may fairly be assumed. Christmas poetry constitutes a department of literature by itself, and, therefore, would hardly be looked for in so small a volume. Domett's "Christmas Hymn" could not, of course, be omitted; but the other Christmas poems which are found here, are those which refer rather to Christmas associations and surroundings than to the religious aspect of the season. It is not proposed to enter the field of translation in this and the succeeding volumes of the series; and the rare exceptions to this rule, which may perhaps be noted in the volumes, will owe their places in the collection to some peculiar fitness for the niche in which the editor has thought best to place them.

The editor takes this opportunity to thank the many authors who have allowed him the use of their poems in this volume, — Mr. Parke Godwin, for his permission to copy from Bryant's poems; Miss Emily C. Weeks, for her permission to quote from the poems of her brother, Robert K. Weeks; and the Century Company, for their courtesy in relation to various poems of which they control the copyright.

The publishers also wish in this place to thank Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin, & Co.; Lee & Shepard; Chas. Scribner's Sons; Ticknor & Co.; Roberts Brothers; George H. Ellis; and Cupples, Upham, & Co., for their uniform courtesy in allowing extracts to be made from the writings of authors whose works are published by them, — courtesy without which this book could not have had an existence.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., November 16, 1885.

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DECEMBER.

DECEMBER.

*Riding upon the Goat, with snow-white hair,
I come, the last of all. This crown of mine
Is of the holly; in my hand I bear
The thyrsus, tipped with fragrant cones of pine.
I celebrate the birth of the Divine,
And the return of the Saturnian reign;—
My songs are carols sung at every shrine,
Proclaiming "Peace on earth, good-will to men."*

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW,
The Poet's Calendar.

DECEMBER.

*STANZAS ON THE FIRST OF DECEMBER,
1793.*

THOUGH now no more the musing ear
Delights to listen to the breeze,
That lingers o'er the greenwood shade,
I love thee, winter! well.

Sweet are the harmonies of spring,
Sweet is the summer's evening gale,
And sweet the autumnal winds that shake
The many-colored grove.

And pleasant to the sobered soul
The silence of the wintry scene,
When Nature shrouds her in her trance
In deep tranquillity.

Not undelightful now to roam
The wild heath sparkling on the sight;
Not undelightful now to pace
The forest's ample rounds;

And see the spangled branches shine,
 And mark the moss of many a hue
 That varies the old tree's brown bark,
 Or o'er the gray stone spreads.

And mark the clustered berries bright
 Amid the holly's gay green leaves ;
 The ivy round the leafless oak
 That clasps its foliage close.

.
 Nor void of beauties now the spring,
 Whose waters hid from summer sun
 Have soothed the thirsty pilgrim's ear
 With more than melody.

The green moss shines with icy glare ;
 The long grass bends its spear-like form ;
 And lovely is the silvery scene
 When faint the sun-beams smile.

.

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

WHITE FROST.

THE ghostly Frost is come ;
 I feel him in the night ;
 The breathless Leaves are numb,
 Motionless with affright :
 The moon, arisen late and still
 Sees all their faces beaded chill.

The ghostly Frost is here,
 I see him in the night;
 Through all the meadows near
 Waver his garments white :
 Ha ! at our window looking through ?
 Ah, Frost, this Fire would conquer you !

JOHN JAMES PIATT.

THE LAZY MIST.

THE lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill,
 Concealing the course of the dark winding rill ;
 How languid the scenes, late so sprightly, appear !
 As Autumn to Winter resigns the pale year.
 The forests are leafless, the meadows are brown,
 And all the gay foppery of summer is flown :
 Apart let me wander, apart let me muse,
 How quick Time is flying, how keen Fate pursues !

.

ROBERT BURNS.

DECEMBER.

It likes me well — December's breath,
 Although its kiss be cold,
 Nor yet the year is sealed in death,
 'Tis only growing old.

Nor yet the brooks have ceased to run,
The rivers freely flow,
And over flowerless fields the sun
Still wreathes a roseate glow.

Soft colors lie on meadow lands,
In many a motley hue,
And o'er the wild white waste of sands,
Just now flocked pigeons flew !

And on the cliffs' cold crested height
The goats, they gambol free,
And swiftly comes a sudden flight
Of swallows o'er the sea.

Apostle-like, the fishermen
Are mending sail and net,
Whose voices ever and again
To some strange song are set.

In stranded boats the children creep
To wait the coming tide,
And watch the foaming breakers leap
Upon the meadow's side.

The year is dying, ay, is dead,
But yet December's breath
A glory and a glow can shed
Irradiating death.

MRS. ADELINE TREADWELL [PARSONS] LUNT.

DECEMBER.

Now the summer all is over !
We have wandered through the clover,
 We have plucked in wood and lea
 Blue-bell and anemone.

We were children of the sun,
Very brown to look upon :
 We were stained, hands and lips,
 With the berries' juicy tips.

And I think that we may know
Where the rankest nettles grow,
 And where oak and ivy weave
 Crimson glories to deceive.

Now the merry days are over !
Woodland-tenants seek their cover,
 And the swallow leaves again
 For his castle-nests in Spain.

Shut the door, and close the blind :
We shall have the bitter wind,
 We shall have the dreary rain
 Striving, driving at the pane.

Send the ruddy fire-light higher ;
Draw your easy chair up nigher ;
 Through the winter, bleak and chill,
 We may have our summer still.

Here are poems we may read,
 Pleasant fancies to our need :
 Ah, eternal summer-time
 Dwells within the poet's rhyme !

All the birds' sweet melodies
 Linger in these songs of his ;
 And the blossoms of all ages
 Waft their fragrance from his pages.
INA DONNA COOLBRITH.

MIDNIGHT MASS FOR THE DYING YEAR.

YES, the Year is growing old,
 And his eye is pale and bleared !
 Death, with frosty hand and cold,
 Plucks the old man by the beard,
 Sorely, sorely !

The leaves are falling, falling,
 Solemnly and slow ;
 Caw! caw! the rooks are calling,
 It is a sound of woe,
 A sound of woe !

Through woods and mountain passes
 The winds, like anthems, roll ;
 They are chanting solemn masses,
 Singing, " Pray for this poor soul,
 Pray, pray ! "

And the hooded clouds, like friars,
Tell their beads in drops of rain,
And patter their doleful prayers;
But their prayers are all in vain,
All in vain !

There he stands in the foul weather,
The foolish, fond Old Year,
Crowned with wild-flowers and with heather,
Like weak, despised Lear,
A king, a king !

Then comes the summer-like day,
Bids the old man rejoice !
His joy ! his last ! O, the old man gray
Loveth that ever-soft voice,
Gentle and low.

To the crimson woods he saith,
To the voice gentle and low
Of the soft air, like a daughter's breath,
"Pray do not mock me so !
Do not laugh at me !"

And now the sweet day is dead ;
Cold in his arms it lies ;
No stain from its breath is spread
Over the glassy skies,
No mist or stain !

Then, too, the Old Year dieth,
And the forests utter a moan,
Like the voice of one who crieth
In the wilderness alone,
“Vex not his ghost!”

Then comes with an awful roar,
Gathering and sounding on,
The storm-wind from Labrador,
The wind Euroclydon,
The storm-wind!

Howl! howl! and from the forest
Sweep the red leaves away!
Would, the sins that thou abhorrest,
O Soul! could thus decay,
And be swept away!

For there shall come a mightier blast,
There shall be a darker day;
And the stars, from heaven down-cast,
Like red leaves be swept away!
Kyrie, eleyson!
Christe, eleyson!

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

EARLY WINTER.

THE waning year looks gently down
On these bright days that come and go :
Dead, faded, buried is the crown
That Summer wore, with face aglow,
When June stepped lightly o'er the hills,
And through the vales sent hastening rills.

Those blissful days come back to chase
The gloom from chill December skies ;
Their fragrance lingers yet to grace
Paths where all tender blooming dies, —
Where the brown earth, with tranquil breast,
Prepares to take its long, deep rest.

Through naked boughs the sunlight sifts,
And gives them beauty all their own ;
Nor yet the feathery snowflake drifts
Through silent woods, on moss and stone :
The hallowed hush, the softened hue,
Weave their own nameless charm anew.

The old year wanes ; the birds of spring
Now gladden other skies than ours :
No bud unfolds ; no insect wing
Sends tribute to these hastening hours ;
But plaintive voices stir below
Their shadowed and unceasing flow.

Thought wanders back, and grasps anew
All that earth gave of good and fair, —
The loves, the hopes that upward grew
And spread in faith's diviner air,
But perished as the days went by,
E'en as the flowers that round us lie.

We know that spring will come, and bring
Again earth's meed of song and bloom;
We know, too, that another spring
Hath, somewhere in God's garden, room
Where love shall find its own, nor miss
One drop from its pure draught of bliss.
MRS. HANNAH JANE [WOODMAN] LEWIS.

DECEMBER.

CHILL the night wind moans and sighs,
On the sward the stubble dies;
Slow across the meadows rank
Float the cloud-rifts grim and dank;
On the hill-side, bare and brown,
Twilight shadows gather down, —
'Tis December.

Stark and gaunt the naked trees
Wrestle with the wrestling breeze,
While beneath, at every breath,
Dead leaves hold a dance of death;

But the pine-trees' sighing grace
Greenly decks the barren place,
In December.

Chirp of bird nor hum of bee
Breaks across the barren lea;
Only silence, cold and drear,
Nestles closely far and near,
While in cloak of russet gray,
Nature hides her bloom away
With December.

Yet we know that, sleeping sound,
Life is waiting underground;
Till beneath his April skies
God shall bid it once more rise,
Warmth and light and beauty rest
Hushed and calm, upon the breast
Of December.

So, though sometimes winter skies
Hide the summer from our eyes,
Taking from its old time place
Some dear form of love and grace,
We can wait, content to bear
Barren fields and frosted air,
Through December.

We can wait, till some sweet dawn
Finds the shadows backward drawn,

And beneath its rosy light
Maytime flushes, warm and bright,
Bring again the bloom that fled
When the earth lay cold and dead .

In December.

MRS. MARY ELIZABETH [MCGRATH] BLAKE.

A DECEMBER ROSE.

FAIR pilgrim rose ! budding in spite of date
In homely gardens where the sunlight falls,
Breeze-haunted by a tune articulate

In perfect melody on green-clad walls,
Tell to this grey and ever-darkening isle
The story of thy gracious winter birth,
And whisper, where the winter sunbeams smile,
Thy simple secret to the prisoned earth.

Tell her of One, who made the sun and air
A refuge for the pent-up toiler's heart,
So that from him, still through his pain and care,
The touch of freedom never might depart :
Tell her that where his open spaces lie,
Still Heaven-reflected for the eye to scan,
Though more and more man's greed the space deny,
Lives yet his message to the self of man.

The gloom is ours ; his the late lights that shine
Serenely on thy modest petals yet,

And frame with glory oak and eglantine,
Where'er rude man his stamp delays to set.
Still through the undying beauty of thy frame
On wings of music ride unwritten words,
And restful spirits find all lands the same
Where blooms the lovely life of flowers and birds.

The roses blush along my ivied wall,
Where wealth's keen hunt has yet forborne to
tread ;
And nothing but God's clouds can draw a pall
Between me and his temple overhead.
The northern skies vie with the vaunted south,
Wherever nature has but air for breath,
And answer from the one Creator's mouth
That life immortal has no space for death.

HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE.

DECEMBER.

THE evening sky unseals its quiet fountain,
Hushing the silence to a drowsy rain ;
It spreads a web of dimness o'er the plain,
And round each meadow tree ;
Makes this steep river-bank a dizzy mountain
And this wide stream a sea.

Stealing from upper headlands of deep mist,
The dark tide bears its icebergs, ocean bound,

White shapeless voyagers, by each other kissed,
 With rustling, ghostly sound ;
The lingering oak-leaves sigh, the birches shiver,
Watching the wrecks of summer, far and near,
Where many a dew-drop, frozen on its bier,
 Drifts down the dusky river.

I know thee not, thou giant elm, who towerest
Thy shadowy branches in unfathomed air ;
And this familiar grove, once light and fair,
 Frowns, an Enchanted Forest.

Couldst thou not choose some other night to moan,
 O hollow-hooting owl ?
There needs no spell from thy bewildered soul ;
 I'm ghost enough alone.

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON

BEFORE THE SNOW.

(AFTER ALBERT GLATIGNY.)

THE winter is upon us, not the snow,
 The hills are etched on the horizon bare,
 The skies are iron grey, a bitter air,
The meagre cloudlets shudder to and fro.
One yellow leaf the listless wind doth blow,
 Like some strange butterfly, unclassed and rare.
Your footsteps ring in frozen alleys, where
The black trees seem to shiver as you go.

Beyond lie church and steeple, with their old
And rusty vanes that rattle as they veer,
A sharper gust would shake them from their hold,
Yet up that path, in summer of the year,
And past that melancholy pile we strolled
To pluck wild strawberries, with merry cheer.

ANDREW LANG.

GLOOMY DECEMBER.

ANCE mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December !
Ance mair I hail thee wi' sorrow and care :
Sad was the parting thou makes me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, oh ! ne'er to meet mair.
Fond lovers' parting is sweet painful pleasure,
Hope beaming mild on the soft parting hour ;
But the dire feeling, O farewell for ever !
Is anguish unmingled, and agony pure.

Wild as the winter now tearing the forest,
'Till the last leaf o' the summer is flown,
Such is the tempest has shaken my bosom,
Since my last hope and last comfort is gone !
Still as I hail thee, thou gloomy December,
Still shall I hail thee wi' sorrow and care ;
For sad was the parting thou makes me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, oh ! ne'er to meet mair.

ROBERT BURNS.

DECEMBER.

THE hills look gaunt in russet garb :
Against the sky the leafless woods
Are dark, and in their solitudes
The chill wind pierces like a barb.

The naked branches grimly clutch
The sullen clouds that threaten snow,
And near the streamlet's icy flow
An old man rests upon his crutch.

A comrade of the dying year,
Upon his wrinkled brow sits Age :
And yet he hath for heritage
A brighter life, so spare your tear !

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

BEFORE THE SNOW.

AUTUMN is gone : through the blue woodlands bare
Shatters the windy rain. A thousand leaves,
Like birds that fly the mournful northern air,
Flutter away from the old forest's eaves.

Autumn is gone : as yonder silent rill,
Slow eddying o'er thick leaf-heaps lately shed,
My spirit, as I walk, moves awed and still,
By thronging fancies wild and wistful led.

Autumn is gone : alas, how long ago

The grapes were plucked, and garnered was the
grain !

How soon death settles on us, and the snow

Wraps with its white alike our graves, our gain !

Yea, autumn's gone ! Yet it robs not my mood

Of that which makes moods dear, — some shoot of
spring

Still sweet within me ; or thoughts of yonder wood

We walked in, — memory's rare environing.

And, though they die, the seasons only take

A ruined substance. All that's best remains

In the essential vision that can make

One light for life, love, death, their joys, their
pains.

GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.

TO A ROBIN REDBREAST

(SINGING IN WINTER).

OH light of heart and wing,

Light-hearted and light-winged, that dost cheer

With song of sprightliest note the waning year,

Thou canst so blithely sing,

That we must only chide our own dull heart,

If in thy music we can bear no part.

Thy haunts are winter-bare,
The leaves in which thou didst so lately keep
Are being trodden to a miry heap ;
But thou art void of care,
And singest not the less, or rather thou
Hast kept thy best and boldest notes till now.

Thou art so bold to sing
Thy sweetest music in the saddest hour,
Because thy trust is in the love and power,
Which can bring back the spring,
Which can array the naked groves again,
And paint with seasonable flowers the plain.

But we are merely sad,
When as for us this earthly life has shed
The leaves that once arrayed it ; and instead
Of rich boughs, foliage clad,
A few bare sticks and twigs stand nakedly,
Fronting against the cold and angry sky.

Yet would we only see
That hope and joy, the growth of lower earth,
Fall from us, that another truer birth
Of the same things may be ;
That the new buds are travelling up behind,
Though hid as yet beneath the naked rind.

We should not then resign
All gladness, when spring promises depart,

But 'mid our wintriest bareness should find heart
To join our songs with thine,
Strong to fulfil, in spirit and in voice,
That hardest of all precepts — to rejoice.

RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH.

FROST.

How small a tooth hath mined the season's heart !
How cold a touch hath set the wood on fire,
Until it blazes like a costly pyre
Built for some Ganges emperor, old and swart,
Soul-spiced on clouds of incense ! Whose the art
That webs the streams, each morn, with silver
wire,
Delicate as the tension of a lyre, —
Whose falchion pries the chestnut-burr apart ?
It is the Frost, a rude and Gothic sprite,
Who doth unbuild the Summer's palaced wealth,
And puts her dear loves all to sword or flight ;
Yet in the hushed, unmindful winter's night
The spoiler builds again with jealous stealth,
And sets a mimic garden, cold and bright.

EDITH MATILDA THOMAS.

DECEMBER.

An old man's life, dim, colorless and cold,
Is like the earth and sky December shows.
The barest joys of sense are all he knows :
Hope that erewhile made their fruition bold,

Now soars beyond. If one sun-glint of gold,
Rifts in the dense grey firmament disclose,
Earth has enough. 'Mid purple mist upthrows
The birch her silver; the larch may hold
With fragile needles yet its amber cone,
Tho' other trees be dark: the pine alone,
Like memory, lingers green, till over all,
Death-like, the snow doth cast its gentle pall.
Child-month and Mother-year in death are one:
The winds of midnight moan memorial.

HENRY G. HEWLETT.

*DECEMBER DAISIES AND DECEMBER
DAYS.*

Ah, how the sight of fair untimely flowers
Awakes a subtle sentiment, and fills
The soul with quiet pleasure. Something thrills
Our being to the core and softly showers
Strange yearning thought upon us. When the close
Of a December day is stirless, mild
As is this twilight hour, we are beguiled
By its seductive softness: and there grows
(As one by one from out the placid sky
The tranquil stars appear), the half-formed doubt
Whether the scene be real. For without
A question kindly Auster cannot try
To bring a greater boon. Joys that arise
All unexpected we most keenly prize.

H. T. MACKENZIE BELL.

BEFORE THE SNOW.

A soft grey sky, marked here and there
With tangled tracery of bare boughs,
A little far-off fading house,
A blurred blank mass of hills that wear
A thickening vale of lifeless air,
Which no wind comes to rouse.

Inspid silence everywhere ;
The waveless waters hardly flow,
In silence laboring flies the crow,
Without a shadow, o'er the bare
Deserted meadows that prepare
To sleep beneath the snow.

ROBERT KELLEY WEEKS.

THE WINTER, O THE WINTER.

THE Winter, O the Winter !
Who does not know it well ?
When day after day, the fields stretch gray,
And the peewit wails on the fell.
When we close up the crannies and shut out the
cold,
And the wind sounds hoarse and hollow,
And our dead loves sleep in the churchyard mould,
And we pray that we soon may follow ;
In the Winter, mournful Winter.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

MY WINTER ROSE.

WHY did you come when the trees were bare ?
Why did you come with the wintry air ?
When the faint note dies in the robin's throat,
And the gables drip and the white flakes float ?

What a strange, strange season to choose to come,
When the heavens are blind and the earth is dumb ;
When naught is left living to dirge the dead,
And even the snowdrop keeps its bed !

Could you not come when woods are green ? *
Could you not come when lambs are seen ?
When the primrose laughs from its child-like sleep,
And the violets hide and the bluebells peep ?

When the air as your breath is sweet, and skies
Have all but the soul of your limpid eyes,
And the year, growing confident day by day,
Weans lusty June from the breast of May ?

Yet had you come then, the lark had lent
In vain his music, the thorn its scent ;
In vain the woodbine budded, in vain
The rippling smile of the April rain.

Your voice would have silenced merle and thrush,
And the rose outbloomed would have blushed to
blush ;

And summer, seeing you, paused, and known
That the glow of your beauty outshone its own.

So timely you came, and well you chose,
You came when most needed, my winter rose.
From the snow I pluck you, and fondly press
Your leaves 'twixt the leaves of my leaflessness.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

STANZAS.

THE dead leaves strew the forest walk,
And withered are the pale wild flowers ;
The frost hangs blackening on the stalk,
The dewdrops fall in frozen showers.
Gone are the Spring's green sprouting bowers,
Gone Summer's rich and mantling vines,
And Autumn, with her yellow hours,
On hill and plain no longer shines.

I learned a clear and wild-toned note,
'That rose and swelled from yonder tree —
A gay bird, with too sweet a throat,
There perched and raised her song for me.
The winter comes, and where is she ?
Away — where summer wings will rove,
Where buds are fresh, and every tree
Is vocal with the notes of love.

Too mild the breath of southern sky,
Too fresh the flower that blushes there,
The northern breeze that rustles by,
Finds leaves too green, and buds too fair;
No forest tree stands stripped and bare,
No stream beneath the ice is dead,
No mountain top with sleety hair
Bends o'er the snows its reverend head.

Go there, with all the birds, — and seek
A happier clime, with livelier flight,
Kiss, with the sun, the evening's cheek,
And leave me lonely with the night.
— I'll gaze upon the cold north light,
And mark where all its glories shone —
See — that it all is fair and bright,
Feel — that it all is cold and gone.

JOHN GARDINER CALKINS BRAINARD.

A FROSTY DAY.

GRASS afield wears silver thatch,
Palings all are edged with rime,
Frost-flowers pattern round the latch,
Cloud nor breeze dissolve the clime.

When the waves are solid floor,
And the clods are iron-bound,
And the boughs are crystall'd hoar,
And the red leaf nailed aground.

When the fieldfare's flight is slow,
And a rosy vapor rim,
Now the sun is small and low,
Belts along the region dim.

When the ice-crack flies and flaws,
Shore to shore with thunder shock,
Deeper than the evening daws,
Clearer than the village clock.

When the rusty blackbird strips,
Bunch by bunch, the coral thorn,
And the pale day-crescent dips
New to heaven a slender horn.

JOHN LEICESTER WARREN.

THE APPROACH OF WINTER.

WINTER cold is coming on ;
No more calls the cuckoo :
No more doth the music gush
From the silver-throated thrush :
No more now at "evening pale,"
Singeth sad the nightingale ;
Nor the blackbird on the lawn ;
Nor the lark at dewy dawn :
Time hath wove his songs anew.
No more young and dancing measures :
No more budding flowery pleasures :

All is over, — all forgot ;
Save by me, who loved them not.

Winter white is coming on ;
And I love his coming :
What, though winds the fields have shorn, —
What, though earth is half forlorn, —
Not a berry on the thorn, —
Not an insect humming ;
Pleasure never can be dead ;
Beauty cannot hide her head !
Look ! in what fantastic showers,
The snow flings down her feathered flowers,
Or whirls about, in drunken glee,
Kissing its love, the holly tree.
Behold ! the Sun himself comes forth,
And sends his beams from south to north, —
To diamonds turns the winter rime,
And lends a glory to the time !
Such days, — when old friends meet together,
Are worth a score of mere spring weather ;
And hark ! the merry bells awake ;
They clamor blithely for our sake !
The clock is sounding from the tower,
“ Four ” — “ five ” — ’tis now — — ’s dinner hour !
Come on, — I see his table spread, —
The sherry, — the claret rosy red,
The champagne sparkling in the light, —
By Bacchus ! we’ll be wise to-night.

BRYAN WALLER PROCTER.

A. WINTER ELEGY.

THE summer's wreath is withered on the plain,
And autumn's graver garb of dusky gold
Lies strewn in sombre glen and silent lane,
And winter, like a palmer sable-stoled,
Watches with cold, unsympathetic eyes
The dying year's faint, final agonies.

Ay, summer is no more ; afar I hear
A heavy sigh and sound among the leaves
As of the feet of those who bear a bier
With wailing voices ; 'tis the wind that grieves,
Seeking through lone dim vales and woodlands dun,
The bright, departed children of the sun.

And I, too, seek in places well-remembered,
Some lingering token of the vanished hours ;
But round me lie, all desolate and dismembered,
The green, mid-forest glades and vine-roofed
bowers,
Where peace, like a sweet presence, held her sway ;
Nothing remains but ruin and decay.

I loiter by the ivy-mantled wall
Where cling the shattered nests upon the bough,
To hear one faint and farewell echo fall
Of all the music that is silent now ;
In vain ! the sere grass shivers on the hill,
The rushes moan beside the frozen rill.

I feel like one in lonely age returning
To seek repose in haunts of happier years,
Who stands and gazes round him, vainly yearning
For one dear landmark that his memory bears,
Till from his revery by some rude hand shaken,
He starts and wakes and finds himself forsaken.

CHARLES LOTIN HILDRETH.

DECEMBER.

WE watched the springtime's robe of green,
The summer's wondrous wealth of flowers,
The stain where autumn's touch had been,
The gloom of winter's darkening hours.
A moment now we turn to look
Along the path the year has trod,
Ere yet the angel bears the book
Of good and evil up to God.

The time has vanished. What is won
When we have counted up our gains?
The time is vanished. What is done —
Of all our toil what end remains?
The storm clouds darken over life,
The wheat dies out, the tares take root;
And in our hearts the seeds of strife
Spring up and bear a bitter fruit.

So was it ever. So it must
Be ever till the end draws near.

The Spirit, fettered by the dust,
 Must ever strive for mastery here.
 Well for us that through life's dark loom
 A wiser hand the shuttle throws ;
 Well for us that amid the gloom
 A ray of comfort comes — He knows.

He knows, and He can understand.
 To weary hearts the thought should be
 A fountain in an arid land,
 A rainbow o'er the stormy sea.
 The year has gone on rapid wing,
 The past is dark, the future dim ;
 We know not yet what life may bring —
 He knows — and we can trust to Him.

R. S. W.,

Golden Hours, December, 1882.

GHOSTS.

Out in the misty moonlight
 The first snow-flakes I see,
 As they frolic among the leafless
 Limbs of the apple-tree.

Faintly they seem to whisper,
 As round the boughs they wing,
 "We are the ghosts of the blossoms
 That died in the early spring."

RICHARD KENDALL MUNKITTRICK.

THE FIRST SNOW.

WINTER has changed his mind and fixt to come.
Now two or three snow-feathers at a time
Drop heavily, as if in doubt if they should drop
Or wait for others to support their fall.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

THE FIRST SNOW-FALL.

THE snow had begun in the gloaming,
And busily all the night
Had been heaping field and highway
With a silence deep and white.

Every pine and fir and hemlock
Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
And the poorest twig on the elm-tree
Was ridged inch deep with pearl.

From sheds new-roofed with Carrara
Came Chanticleer's muffled crow,
The stiff rails were softened to swan's-down,
And still fluttered down the snow.

I stood and watched by the window
The noiseless work of the sky,
And the sudden flurries of snow-birds,
Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of a mound in sweet Auburn
Where a little headstone stood ;
How the flakes were folding it gently,
As did robins the babes in the wood.

Up spoke our own little Mabel,
Saying, " Father, who makes it snow ? "
And I told of the good All-father
Who cares for us here below.

Again I looked at the snow-fall,
And thought of the leaden sky
That arched o'er our first great sorrow
When that mound was heaped so high.

I remember the gradual patience
That fell from that cloud like snow,
Flake by flake, healing and hiding
The scar of our deep-plunged woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
" The snow that husheth all,
Darling, the merciful Father
Alone can make it fall ! "

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her ;
And she, kissing back, could not know
That *my* kiss was given to her sister,
Folded close under deepening snow.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

WINTER—A LAMENT.

O SAD-VOICED winds that sigh about my door !
Ye mourn the pleasant hours that are no more,
 The tender graces of the vanished spring,
The sultry splendor of long summer days,
 The songs of birds, and streamlets murmuring,
And far hills dimly seen through purple haze.

Still as the shrouded dead the cold earth lies ;
Sunless and sullen droop the troubled skies ;
 There is no sound within the leafless wood,
No mellow echo on the barren hill ;
 Hushed is the piping of the insect brood,
And hushed the gurgle of the meadow-rill.

By rutted lanes the tangled green is gone ;
The vine no longer hides the naked stone,
 But with its skeleton black fingers clings,
Its clustered berries, withered on the stem,
 Held sadly out like humble offerings,
Too poor for any hand to gather them.

On hill-side pastures where the panting sheep
Hid from high noon in piny shadows deep,
 In level lawns with daisies overcast,
The haunts of belted bees and butterflies,
 The sere grass whistles in the cutting blast,
The wrinkled mould in frozen furrows lies.

Now o'er the landscape dreary and forsaken,
Like some thin veil by unseen fingers shaken,
The snow comes softly hovering through the air,
Flake after flake in crossing threads of white,
Weaving in misty mazes everywhere,
Till forest, field, and hill are shut from sight.

O sad-voiced winds that sigh about my door !
I mourn with ye the hours that are no more.

My heart is weary of the sullen sky,
The leafless branches and the frozen plain ;
I long to hear the earliest wild-bird's cry
And see the earth in gladsome green again.

CHARLES LOTIN HILDRETH.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE OF THE SNOW.

WHEN autumn days grew pale, there came a troop
Of childlike forms from that cold mountain-top ;
With trailing garments through the air they came,
Or walked the ground with girded loins, and threw
Spangles of silvery frost upon the grass,
And edged the brook with glistening parapets,
And built it crystal bridges, touched the pool,
And turned its face to glass, or, rising thence,
They shook from their full laps the soft, light snow,
And buried the great earth, as autumn winds
Bury the forest-floor in heaps of leaves.

.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

TO A VIOLET FOUND IN DECEMBER.

ILL-FATED Violet ! opening thy blue eye
In Winter's face, who treacherous smiles, to see
So fair a child, of parent such as he !
And didst thou think in his chill lap to lie —
Wrapt in the fallen mantle of the tree —
Secure as if Spring's bosom cherished thee ?
Ah, little flower ! thy doom must be to die
By thine own sire, like Saturn's progeny.
In vain do human gentleness and love,
And breathing beauty hope to melt the soul
Through which a holy influence never stole ;
Though softening love the lion's heart may move,
It cannot make cold *self* itself forget ;
Nor canst thou Winter change, sweet Violet.

MRS. ELIZABETH CLEMENTINE [DODGE] [STEDMAN] KINNEY.

SNOWFLAKES.

FALLING all the night-time,
Falling all the day,
Silent into silence
From the far-away, —

Never lay like glory
On the April leas,
Never Summer blossoms
Thick and white as these ;

Never leafy wreathing,
Never viny scroll,
Thus hung woodland arches,
Crowned the meadow knoll.

Falling all the night-time,
Falling all the day,
Stilly as the spirits
Wing from far-away, —

Snowflakes, chance you're only
Dreamer's fantasies,
Souls of flowers flutt'ring
Over Winter leas.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY.

A CHILD'S FIRST SIGHT OF SNOW.

OH, come and look at his blue, sweet eyes,
As, through the window, they glance around
And see the glittering white surprise
The Night has laid on the ground !

This beautiful Mystery you have seen,
So new to your life, and to mine so old,
Little wordless Questioner — "What does it mean ?"
Why, it means, I fear, that the world is cold.

MRS. SARAH MORGAN [BRYAN] PIATT.

DECEMBER.

IN spangle of frost, and stars of snow,
Unto his end the Year doth wend ;
And sad for some the days did go,
And glad for some were beginning and end ;
But sad or glad, grieve not for his death,
Mournfully counting your measures of breath ;
You that, before the worlds began,
Were seed of woman and surety of man ;
You that are older than Aldebaran !
It was but a whirl round about the sun,
A silver dance of the planets done,
A step in the Infinite Minuet
Which the great stars pace to a music set
By Life Immortal and Love Divine
Which sounds, in your span of threescore and ten,
One chord of the Harmony, fair and fine,
Of What did make you women and men.
In spangle of frost, and stars of snow
Sad or glad — let the Old Year go !

EDWIN ARNOLD.

WINTER.

THE frost is here,
And fuel is dear,
And woods are sear,
And fires burn clear,

And frost is here
And has bitten the heel of the going Year.

Bite, frost, bite !
You roll up away from the light
The blue woodlouse, and the plump dormouse,
And the bees are still'd, and the flies are kill'd,
And you bite far into the heart of the house,
But not into mine.

Bite, frost, bite !
The woods are all the searer,
The fuel is all the dearer,
The fires are all the clearer,
My spring is all the nearer,
You have bitten into the heart of the earth,
But not into mine.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE WHITE BLOSSOM'S OFF THE BOG.

THE white blossom's off the bog, and the leaves are
off the trees,
And the singing birds have scattered across the
stormy seas ;
And oh ! 'tis winter,
Wild, wild winter !
With the lonesome wind sighing for ever through
the trees.

How green the leaves were springing ! how glad the
birds were singing !

When I rested on the meadow with my head on
Patrick's knees ;

And oh ! 'twas springtime,

Sweet, sweet springtime !

With the daisies all dancing before in the breeze.

With the spring the fresh leaves they'll laugh upon
the trees,

And the birds they'll flutter back with their songs
across the seas,

But I'll never rest again with my head on Patrick's
knees ;

And for me 'twill be winter,

All the year winter,

With the lonesome wind sighing for ever through
the trees.

ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES.

THE SNOW-STORM.

ANNOUNCED by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow ; and driving o'er the fields
Seems nowhere to alight ; the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit

Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.
Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry, evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
So fanciful, so savage; nought cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths.
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and at the gate
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

DECEMBER.

No more the scarlet maples flash and burn
Their beacon-fires from hilltop and from plain;
Their meadow-grasses and the woodland fern
In the bleak woods lie withered once again.

The trees stand bare, and bare each stony scar
Upon the cliffs; half frozen glide the rills;
The steel-blue river like a scimeter
Lies cold and curved between the dusky hills.

Over the upland farm I take my walk,
And miss the flaunting flocks of golden-rod;
Each autumn flower a dry and leafless stalk,
Each mossy field a track of frozen sod.

I hear no more the robin's summer song
Through the gray network of the wintry woods;
Only the cawing crows that all day long
Clamor about the windy solitudes.

Like agate stones upon earth's frozen breast,
The little pools of ice lie round and still;
While sullen clouds shut downward east and west
In marble ridges stretched from hill to hill.

Come once again, O southern wind, — once more
Come with thy wet wings flapping at my pane;
Ere snow-drifts pile their mounds about my door,
One parting dream of summer bring again.

Ah, no! I hear the windows rattle fast;
I see the first flakes of the gathering snow,
That dance and whirl before the northern blast.
No countermand the march of days can know.

December drops no weak, relenting tear,
By our fond summer sympathies ensnared;
Nor from the perfect circle of the year
Can even winter's crystal gems be spared.

CHRISTOPHER PEARSE CRANCH.

A DECEMBER MORNING.

You have seen a winter morning, — the horizon dull
and low,
When the earth and all belonging, lay a level waste
of snow.

In the bleak and empty distance there was naught
of all we knew,
Save the gaunt and naked poplars to arrest the wan-
dering view.

It was as a stretch of desert, with no sign of life
thereon, —
The familiar hills and hollows, and the fields and
fences gone.

Every road and lane and byway, far and near, were
blotted out;
Hushed the sound of bells, and silent were the
hunter's gun and shout;

E'en the axes of the choppers were unheard amidst
the wood,
And in drifts the horse of Iron with his train im-
prisoned stood.

East and West, and North and Southward, mute and
white the vastness lay,
Brooded dumb the low and sullen, blank infinitude
of gray.

JAMES POWER IRVINE.

SNOW.

Lo, what wonders the day hath brought,
Born of the soft and slumbrous snow !
Gradual, silent, slowly wrought ;
Even as an artist, thought by thought,
Writes expression on lip and brow.

Hanging garlands the eaves o'erbrim,
Deep drifts smother the paths below ;
The elms are shrouded, trunk and limb,
And all the air is dizzy and dim
With a whirl of dancing, dazzling snow.

Dimly out of the baffled sight
Houses and church-spires stretch away ;
The trees, all spectral and still and white,
Stand up like ghosts in the failing light,
And fade and faint with the blinded day.

Down from the roofs in gusts are hurled
 The eddying drifts to the waste below ;
 And still is the banner of storm unfurled,
 Till all the drowned and desolate world
 Lies dumb and white in a trance of snow.

Slowly the shadows gather and fall,
 Still the whispering snow-flakes beat ;
 Night and darkness are over all :
 Rest, pale city, beneath their pall !
 Sleep, white world, in thy winding-sheet !

Clouds may thicken, and storm-winds breathe :
 On my wall is a glimpse of Rome, —
 Land of my longing ! — and underneath
 Swings and trembles my olive-wreath ;
 Peace and I are at home, at home !

MRS. ELIZABETH ANN [CHASE] [AKERS] ALLEN.

A WINTER FANTASY.

*December has brought you a bonnie May, —
 A bonnie sweetheart is bound your way :
 He is coming — tho' you little wot, —
 You are waiting — yet he knows it not !*

YOUR veil is thick, and none would know
 The pretty face it quite obscures ;
 But if you foot it through the snow,
 Distrust those little boots of yours.

The tell-tale snow, a sparkling mould,
Says where they go and whence they came,
Lightly they touch its carpet cold,
And where they touch they sign your name.

She pass'd beneath yon branches bare,
How fair her face, and how content !
I only know her face was fair, —
I only know she came and went.

Pipe, robins, pipe ; though boughs be bleak,
Ye are her winter choristers ;
Whose cheek will press that rose-cold cheek ?
What lips those fresh young lips of hers ?
FREDERICK LOCKER.

WINTER.

Now, o'er all the dreary Northland,
Mighty Peboan, the Winter,
Breathing on the lakes and rivers,
Into stone had changed their waters.
From his hair he shook the snow-flakes,
Till the plains were strewn with whiteness,
One uninterrupted level,
As if, stooping, the Creator
With his hand had smoothed them over.
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

A DOUBTING HEART.

WHERE are the swallows fled?
Frozen and dead,
Perchance, upon some bleak and stormy shore.
Oh, doubting heart!
Far over purple seas
They wait, in sunny ease,
The balmy Southern breeze
To bring them to their Northern home once more.

Why must the flowers die?
Prisoned they lie
In the cold tomb, heedless of tears or rain.
Oh, doubting heart!
They only sleep below
The soft, white ermine snow
While winter winds shall blow,
To breathe and smile upon you soon again.

The sun has hid its rays
These many days:
Will weary hours never leave the earth?
Oh, doubting heart!
The stormy clouds on high
Veil the same sunny sky
That soon (for spring is nigh)
Shall wake the summer into golden mirth.

Fair hope is dead, and light
Is quenched in night:

What sound can break the silence of despair?

Oh, doubting heart!

The sky is overcast,

Yet stars shall rise at last,

Brighter for darkness past,

And angels' silver voices stir the air.

ADELAIDE ANNE PROCTER.

IN SNOW.

[Most of the Afghan dead were fine, well-built young fellows. — *Special correspondent of "The Standard," December 10, 1878.*]

O ENGLISH Mother in the ruddy glow

Hugging your baby closer when outside

You see the silent, soft, and cruel snow

Falling again, and think what ills betide

Unsheltered creatures, — your sad thoughts may go

Where War and Winter now two spectral wolves,

Hunt in the freezing vapor that involves

Those Asian peaks of ice and gulfs below.

Does this young Soldier heed the snow that fills

His mouth and open eyes? or mind, in truth,

To-night, *his* mother's parting syllables?

His coat is red — but what of that? Keep ruth

For others; this is but an Afghan youth

Shot by the stranger on his native hills.

Fraser's Magazine, January, 1879.

THE COMING OF WINTER.

. . . WINTER came apace, with snow and frost,
And wild storms whistling up and down the coast :
Lashed to its depths the tortured ocean shrank,
While the wind drove its billows, rank on rank,
Scourging their crests milk-white ; all sailors then
Drew up their ships upon the shore, for men
Fear the fierce winter and the furious sea.

EDWIN ARNOLD,
Hero and Leander.

A SNOW STORM.

DEFORMED by tempests, the sweet blue
Is drowned in clouds of fleecy spray ;
On, on, in ranks for ever new,
For ever maddening in their play.

Above, the driving storm ; below,
The Earth is fashioned at its will :
Its chisel carves the yielding snow
To forms beyond all human skill.

But we warm-nested, in the heart
Of this dim elemental war,
Sit calmly tranquil, or but start
When rocks the pane with stormier jar

We look into each other's eyes,
And see a friendly peace which says,

While on the snowy Cossack flies,
"Rave ye without, here Quiet stays."

This silent, unexpressed delight
Grows brighter so severely set;
Heart-warm against the stormy white,
The Rose of Joy burns warmer yet.

One kindling of the soul can make
These wintry tumults disappear,
And all their dreariness partake
Its own illumined atmosphere.

THOMAS GOLD APPLETON.

MOONLIGHT IN DECEMBER.

THE moon above the eastern wood
Shone at its full; the hill-range stood
Transfigured in the silver flood,
Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,
Dead white, save where some sharp ravine
Took shadow, or the sombre green
Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black
Against the whiteness at their back.
For such a world and such a night
Most fitting that unwarming light,
Which only seemed where'er it fell
To make the coldness visible.

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER,
Snow Bound.

IN A DREAR-NIGHTED DECEMBER.

IN a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity :
The north cannot undo them
With a sleety whistle through them ;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look ;
But with a sweet forgetting,
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

Ah ! would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy !
But were there ever any
Writhed not at passèd joy ?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it
Nor numbèd sense to steal it,
Was never said in rhyme.

JOHN KEATS.

DESERTED.

HIGH in the pear-tree's branches
 A nest swings to and fro,
 And the winds about it moaning
 Fill it with drifting snow;
 And a lone bird softly twitters
 When wanes the ghostly day:
 "Oh, where are the red-breast lovers
 That lingered here in May?"

On the hill-top stands a ruin
 Beyond the dreary plain,
 And the wind sends the wild snow flying
 Through every broken pane,
 While moans, on the hearth forsaken
 An owl of orders gray:—
 "Oh, where are the happy lovers
 Who lingered here in May?"

RICHARD KENDALL MUNKITTRICK.

NOW WINTER COMES.

(RONDEAU.)

Now Winter comes, the drifting snow,
 Sifts through the elms and sinks below
 Upon the paths, whose vesture white
 Now marks, now hides with covering light,
 The trace of passers to and fro.

Dim and more dim the grey lights grow,
The shadows glide with motion slow
 Across the ground, as falls the night,
 Now Winter comes.

Far down the arch of elm-trees glow,
Through flakes that lightly eddying flow,
 The college lights, whose flashes bright,
 The shadows dark, unceasing fight, —
Such varied scenes my windows show,
 Now Winter comes.

GEORGE PIERCE BAKER.

DECEMBER.

ONLY the Sea intoning,
 Only the wainscot-mouse,
Only the wild wind moaning
 Over the lonely house.

Darkest of all Decembers
 Ever my life has known,
Sitting here by the embers,
 Stunned and helpless, alone, —

Dreaming of two graves lying
 Out in the damp and chill :
One where the buzzard, flying,
 Pauses at Malvern Hill ;

The other, — alas ! the pillows
 Of that uneasy bed

Rise and fall with the billows
Over our sailor's head.

Theirs the heroic story, —
Died, by frigate and town !
Theirs the Calm and the Glory,
Theirs the Cross and the Crown.

Mine to linger and languish
Here by the wintry sea.
Ah, faint heart ! in thy anguish,
What is there left to thee ?

Only the sea intoning,
Only the wainscot-mouse,
Only the wild wind moaning
Over the lonely house.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

A WINTER MORNING.

THE snow-drifts pile the window-ledge,
The frost is keen, the air is still ;
The lane that lies below the hill
Is drifted even with the hedge ;
Gray skies, and dark trees shaken bare,
Blue smoke that rises straight in air ; —
And down the west a yellow glare
Is driven like a wedge.

L. FRANK TOOKER,

In the Century Magazine.

WINTER IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

(CHILD'S SONG IN WINTER.)

OUTSIDE the garden
The wet skies harden ;
The gates are barred on
 The summer side :
Shut out the flower-time,
Sunbeam and shower-time ;
Make way for our time,
 The winter-tide.

Green once and cheery,
The woods, worn weary,
Sigh as the dreary
 Weak sun goes home :
A great wind grapples
The wave, and dapples

The dead green floor of the sea with foam.

Through fell and moorland,
And salt-sea foreland,
Our noisy norland
 Resounds and rings ;
Waste waves there under
Are blown in sunder,
And winds make thunder
 With cloudwide wings ;
Sea-drift makes dimmer
The beacon's glimmer ;
Nor sail nor swimmer

Can try the tides;
And snow drifts thicken
Where, when leaves quicken,
Under the heather the sundew hides.

Green land and red land,
Moorside and headland,
Are white as dead land,
 Are all as one;
Nor honied heather
Nor bells to gather,
Fair with fair weather
 And faithful sun:
Fierce frost has eaten
All flowers that sweeten
The fells rain-beaten;
 And winds their foes
Have made the snow's bed
Down in the rose-bed;
Deep in the snow's bed bury the rose,

Bury her deeper
Than any sleeper;
Sweet dreams will keep her
 All day, all night;
Though sleep benumb her
And time o'ercome her,
She dreams of summer,
 And takes delight,
Dreaming and sleeping

In love's good keeping,
While rain is weeping
 And no leaves cling ;
Winds will come bringing her
Comfort, and singing her
Stories and songs and good news of the spring.

Draw the white curtain
Close, and be certain
She takes no hurt in
 Her soft low bed ;
She feels no colder,
And grows not older,
Though snows enfold her
 From foot to head ;
She turns not chilly
Like weed or lily
In marsh or hilly
 High watershed,
Or green soft island
In lakes of highland ;
She sleeps awhile, and she is not dead.

For all the hours,
Come sun, come showers,
Are friends of flowers,
 And fairies all ;
When frost entrapt her,
They came and lapt her
In leaves, and wrapt her
 With shroud and pall ;

In red leaves wound her,
With dead leaves bound her
Dead brows, and round her
 A death-knell rang ;
Rang the death-knell for her
Sang 'is it well for her,
Well, is it well with you, rose ?' they sang.

O what and O where is
The rose now, fairies,
So shrill the air is,
 So wild the sky ?
Poor last of roses,
Her worst of woes is
The noise she knows is
 The winter's cry ;
His hunting hollo
Has scared the swallow ;
Fain would she follow
 And fain would fly :
But wind unsettles
Her poor last petals ;
Had she but wings, and she would not die.

Come as you love her,
Come close and cover
Her white face over,
 And forth again
Ere sunset glances
On foam that dances,

Through lowering lances
 Of bright white rain ;
And make your playtime
Of winter's daytime,
As if the Maytime
 Were here to sing ;
As if the snowfalls
Were soft like blowballs
Blown in a mist from the stalk in the spring.

Each reed that grows in
Our stream is frozen,
The fields it flows in
 Are hard and black ;
The water-fairy
Waits wise and wary
Till time shall vary
 And thaws come back.
'O sister, water.'
The wind besought her,
'O twin-born daughter
 Of spring with me
Stay with me, play with me,
Take the warm way with me,
Straight for the summer and over sea.'

But winds will vary,
And wise and wary
The patient fairy
 Of water waits ;

All shrunk and wizen,
In iron prison,
Till spring re-risen
 Unbar the gates ;
Till, as with clamor
Of axe and hammer,
Chained streams that stammer
 And struggle in straits
Burst bonds that shiver,
And thaws deliver
The roaring river in stormy spates.

.
As men's cheeks faded
On shores invaded,
When shorewards waded
 The lords of fight ;
When churl and craven
Saw hard on haven
The wide-winged raven
 At mainmast height ;
When monks affrighted
To windward sighted
The birds full-flighted
 Of swift sea-kings ;
So earth turns paler
When Storm the sailor
Steers in with a roar in the race of his wings.

O strong sea-sailor,
Whose cheek turns paler

For wind or hail or
 For fear of thee?
O far sea-farer,
O thunder-bearer,
Thy songs are rarer
 Than soft songs be.
O fleet-foot stranger,
O north-sea ranger
Through days of danger
 And ways of fear,
Blow thy horn here for us,
Blow the sky clear for us,
Send us the song of the sea to hear.

Roll the strong stream of it
Up, till the scream of it
Wake from a dream of it
 Children that sleep,
Seamen that fare for them
Forth, with a prayer for them;
Shall not God care for them,
 Angels not keep?
Spare not the surges
Thy stormy scourges;
Spare us the dirges
 Of wives that weep.
Turn back the waves for us:
Dig no fresh graves for us,
Wind, in the manifold gulfs of the deep.

O stout north-easter,
Sea-king, land waster.
For all thine haste, or
 Thy stormy skill,
Yet hadst thou never,
For all endeavor,
Strength to dissever
 Or strength to spill,
Save of his giving
Who gave our living,
Whose hands are weaving
 What ours fulfill ;
Whose feet tread under
The storms and thunder
Who made our wonder to work his will.

His years and hours,
His world's blind powers,
His stars and flowers,
 His nights and days,
Sea-tide and river,
And waves that shiver,
Praise God, the giver
 Of tongues to praise.
Winds in their blowing,
And fruits in growing ;
Time in its going,
 While time shall be ;
In death and living
With one thanksgiving,
Praise him whose hand is the strength of the sea.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

IN DECEMBER.

WHEN dark December glooms the day,
And takes our autumn joys away ;
When short and scant the sunbeam throws
Upon the weary waste of snows
A cold and profitless regard,
Like patron on a needy bard ;
When sylvan occupation's done,
And o'er the chimney rests the gun,
And hang in idle trophy near,
The game-pouch, fishing-rod and spear ;
When wiry terrier, rough and grim,
And greyhound, with his length of limb,
And pointer, now employed no more,
Cumber our parlor's narrow floor ;
When in his stall the impatient steed
Is long condemned to rest and feed ;
When from our snow-encircled home
Scarce cares the hardest step to roam,
Since path is none, save that to bring
The needful water from the spring ;
When wrinkled news-page, thrice conned o'er,
Beguiles the dreary hour no more,
And darkling politician, crossed,
Inveighs against the lingering post,
And answering housewife sore complains
Of carriers' snow-imposed wains ;—
When such the country-cheer, I come
Well pleased to seek our city home ;

For converse and for books to change
 The Forests' melancholy range,
 And welcome with renewed delight
 The busy day and social night.

.
 Who loves not more the night of June
 Than dull December's gloomy noon?
 The moonlight than the fog of frost?
 And can we say which cheats the most?

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

IT IS A WINTER NIGHT.

It is a winter night,
 And the stilly earth is white
 With the blowing of the lilies of the snow;
 Once it was as red
 With the roses summer shed,
 But the roses fled with summer long ago.

We sang a merry tune,
 In the jolly days of June,
 And we danced adown the garden in the light :
 Now December's come,
 And our hearts are dark and dumb
 As we huddle o'er the embers here to-night.

RICHARD HENRY STODDARD.

CARPE DIEM.

(RONDEAU.)

TO-DAY, what is there in the air
That makes December seem sweet May?
There are no swallows anywhere,
Nor crocuses to crown your hair,
And hail you down my garden way.

Last night the full-moon's frozen stare
Struck me, perhaps; or did you say,
Really, you'd come, sweet friend and fair,
To-day?

To-day is here;—come, crown to-day,
With Spring's delight or Spring's despair!
Love cannot bide old Time's delay—
Down my glad gardens light winds play,
And my whole life shall bloom and bear
To-day.

THEOPHILE MARZIALS.

SONG OF THE NORTH WIND.

HARK to the voice of me!
Hear thou the singing
Of him who has never
Been paid for his song!

This is the choice of me,
Still to go ringing
The rhymes that forever
Are surly and strong.

Know'st thou the regions cold
Whence I have hasted ?
Know'st thou the way I take
Over the earth ?
Still stand the legions old —
Ice-kings unwasted —
Fending the frigid lake
Where I had birth.

Frost-banded fountains
Snow-fed from far peaks ;
Firths of the polar sea
Rigid as stone ;
Shag-bearded mountains ;
Deeps that no star seeks ;
Strange lights that solar be —
These I have known.

Men fear the breath of me ;
Sorrow and anguish,
Famine and fever
Follow my path.
I am the death of thee ;
I make thee languish ;
Swiftly I sever
Love's ties in my wrath.

Chains cannot hold me,
Gyves cannot bind me,
Bolts cannot lock me,
Floods cannot drown !
Fly — and I fold thee ;
Hide — and I find thee ;
Cry — and I mock thee,
Howling thee down !

JAMES BENJAMIN KENYON.

IN DECEMBER.

THE sun that brief December day
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,
And, darkly circled, gave at noon
A sadder light than waning moon.
Slow tracing down the thickening sky
Its mute and ominous prophecy,
A portent seeming less than threat,
It sank from sight before it set.
A chill no coat, however stout,
Of homespun stuff could quite shut out,
A hard, dull bitterness of cold,
That checked, mid-vein, the circling race
Of life-blood in the sharpened face,
The coming of the snow-storm told.
The wind blew east : we heard the roar
Of Ocean on his wintry shore,

And felt the strong pulse throbbing there
Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

.
Unwarmed by any sunset light
The gray day darkened into night,
A night made hoary with the swarm
And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,
As zig-zag wavering to and fro
Crossed and recrossed the wingéd snow :
And ere the early bedtime came
The white drift piled the window-frame,
And through the glass the clothes-line posts
Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts.

So all night long the storm roared on :
The morning broke without a sun ;
In tiny spherule traced with lines
Of Nature's geometric signs,
In starry flake, and pellicle,
All day the hoary meteor fell ;
And, when the second morning shone,
We looked upon a world unknown,
On nothing we could call our own.
Around the glistening wonder bent
The blue walls of the firmament,
No cloud above, no earth below, —
A universe of sky and snow !
The old familiar sights of ours
Took marvellous shapes ; strange domes and towers
Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,
Or garden wall, or belt of wood ;

A smooth white mound the brush-pile showed,
 A fenceless drift what once was road ;
 The bridle-post an old man sat
 With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat ;
 The well-curb had a Chinese roof ;
 And even the long sweep high aloof,
 In its slant splendor, seemed to tell
 Of Pisa's leaning miracle.

.
 All day the gusty north-wind bore
 The loosening drift its breath before ;
 Low-circling round its southern zone
 The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER,
Snow Bound.

FROST.

THE pane is etched with wondrous tracery ;
 Curve interlaced with curve and line with line,
 Like subtle measures of sweet harmony
 Transformed to shapes of beauty crystalline.

Slim, graceful vines and tendrils of such sort
 As never grew save in some fairy world,
 Wind up from roots of misted silver wrought
 Through tulip flowers and lilies half unfurled.

Shag firs and hemlocks blend with plumy palms,
 Spiked cacti spring from feathery ferns and weeds,

And sea-blooms such as rock in Southern calms
Mingle their foamy fronds with sedge and reeds.

And there are flights of birds with iris wings
That shed in mid-air many a brilliant plume,
And scintillating shoals of swimming things
That seem to float in clear green ocean gloom.

And there are diamond-crusted diadems,
And orbs of pearl and sceptres of pale gold,
Stored up in crystal grottos, lit with gems
And paved with emeralds of price untold.

And marvellous architecture of no name,
Façades and shafts of loveliest form and hue,
Keen pinnacles and turrets tipped with flame,
And fretted domes of purest sapphire blue.

All these the genii of the Frost last night
Wrought in the still cold hours by charm and rune;
And now, like dreams dispelled before the light,
They float away in vapor on the noon.

CHARLES LOTIN HILDRETH.

LIFE FROM DEATH.

HAD one ne'er seen the miracle
Of May-time from December born,
Who would have dared the tale to tell
That 'neath ice-ridges slept the corn?

White death lies deep upon the hills,
And moanings through the tree-tops go ;
The exulting wind, with breath that chills,
Shouts triumph to the unresting snow.

My study window shows me where
On hard-fought fields the summer died :
Its banners now are stripped and bare
Of even autumn's fading pride.

Yet on the gust that surges by,
I read a pictured promise : soon
The storm of earth and frown of sky
Will melt into luxuriant June.

MINOT JUDSON SAVAGE.

NAE STAR WAS GLINTIN' OUT ABOON.

NAE star was glintin' out aboon,
The clouds were dark and hid the moon ;
The whistling gale was in my teeth,
And round me was the deep snaw wreath ;
But on I went the dreary mile,
And sung right cantie a' the while,
I gae my plaid a closer fauld ;
My hand was warm, my heart was bauld,
I didna heed the storm and cauld,
While ganging *to* my Katie.

But when I trod the same way back,
 It seemed a sad and waefu' track ;
 The brae and glen were lone and lang ;
 I didna sing my cantie sang ;
 I felt how sharp the sleet die fa',
 And couldna face the wind at a'
 Oh ! sic a change ! how could it be ?
 I ken fu' well, and sae may ye —
 The sunshine had been gloom to me
 While ganging *frae* my Katie.

ELIZA COOK.

IN WINTER.

(BALLADE.)

OH, to go back to the days of June,
 Just to be young and alive again,
 Hearken again to the mad, sweet tune
 Birds were singing with might and main :
 South they flew at the summer's wane,
 Leaving their nests for the storms to harry,
 Since time was coming for wind and rain
 Under the wintry skies to marry.

Wearily wander by dale and dune
 Footsteps fettered with clanking chain —
 Free they were in the days of June,
 Free they never can be again :

Fetters of age and fetters of pain,
Joys that fly, and sorrows that tarry —
Youth is over, and hope were vain
Under the wintry skies to marry.

Now we chant but a desolate rune —
“Oh, to be young and alive again!” —
But never December turns to June,
And length of living is length of pain:
Winds in the nestless trees complain,
Snows of winter about us tarry,
And never the birds come back again
Under the wintry skies to marry.

ENVOY.

Youths and maidens, blithesome and vain,
Time makes thrusts that you cannot parry,
Mate in season, for who is fain
Under the wintry skies to marry?

MRS. ELLEN LOUISE [CHANDLER] MOULTON,
In the Century Magazine.

THE GREAT SNOW.

’Twas the year of the Great Snow.

First the East began to blow
Chill and shrill for many days,
On the wild wet woodland ways.

Then the North, with crimson cheeks,
Blew upon the pond for weeks,
Chill'd the water thro' and thro',
Till the first thin ice-crust grew
Blue and filmy; then at last
All the pond was frosted fast,
Prison'd, smother'd, fetter'd tight,
Let it struggle as it might.
And the first Snow drifted down
On the roofs of Drowsietown.

First the vanguard of the Snow;
Falling flakes, whirling slow,
Drifting darkness, troubled dream;
Then a motion and a gleam;
Sprinkling with a carpet white
Orchards, swamps, and woodland ways,
Thus the first Snow took its flight,
And there was a hush for days.
'Mid that hush the Spectre dim,
Faint of breath and thin of limb,
HOAR-FROST, like a maiden's ghost,
Nightly o'er the marshes crost
In the moonlight: where she flew,
At the touch of her chill dress
Cobwebs of the glimmering dew
Froze to silvern loveliness.

.
Then the Phantom Fog came forth,
Following slowly from the North;

Wheezing, coughing, blown, and damp,
He sat sullen in the swamp,
Scowling with a blood-shot eye
As the canvas-backs went by ;
Till the North Wind with a shout,
Thrust his pole and poked him out ;
And the Phantom, with a scowl,
 Blackening night and darkening day,
Hooted after by the owl,
 Lamely halted on his way.

Now in flocks that ever increase
Honk the armies of the geese,
'Gainst a sky of crimson red
Silhouetted overhead.

After them in a dark mass,
Sleet and hail hiss as they pass,
Rattling on the frozen lea
With their shrill artillery.

Then a silence : then comes on
Frost, the steel-bright skeleton !

.
Touching with his tingling wand
Trees and shrubs on every hand,
Till they change transform'd to sight,
Into dwarfs and Druids white, —
Icicle-bearded, frosty-shrouded
Underneath his mantle clouded ;
And on many of their shoulders,
Chill, indifferent to beholders,

Sits the barred owl in a heap,
Ruffled, dumb, and fast asleep.

.

In a silence sat the Thing,
Looking north and listening !
And the farmers drave their teams
Past the woods and by the streams,
Crying as they met together,
With chill noses, "*Frosty Weather !*"
And along the iron ways
Tinkle, tinkle, went the sleighs.

.

Still Frost waited, very still ;
Then he whistled, loud and shrill ;
Then he pointed north, and lo !
The main Army of the Snow.

Black as Erebus afar,
Blotting sun, and moon, and star,
Drifting, in confusion driven,
Screaming, straggling, rent and riven,
Whirling, wailing, blown afar
In an awful wind of War,
Dragging drifts of dead beneath,
 With a melancholy groan,
While the fierce Frost set his teeth,
 Rose erect and waved them on !

All day long the legions passed
On an ever-gathering blast ;

In an ever-gathering night
Fast they eddied on their flight.
With a tramping and a roar,
Like the waves on a wild shore ;
With a motion and a gleam,
Whirling, driven in a dream ;
On they drave in drifts of white,
Burying Drowsietown from sight,
Covering ponds, and woods and roads,
Shrouding trees and men's abodes ;
While the great Pond loaded deep,
Turning over in its sleep,
Groaned ; but when night came, forsooth,
 Grew the tramp into a thunder ;
Wind met wind with wail uncouth,
Frost and Storm fought nail and tooth,
 Shrieking, and the roofs rocked under.
Scared out of its sleep that night,
Drowsietown awoke in fright ;
Chimney-pots above it flying,
 Windows crashing to the ground,
Snowflakes blinding, multiplying,
 Snow-drift whirling round and round ;
While, whene'er the strife seemed dying,
The great North-wind, shrilly crying,
 Clash'd his shield in battle-sound !

Multitudinous and vast,
Legions after legions passed.
Still the air behind was drear
With new legions coming near ;

Still they waver'd, wander'd on,
 Glimmer'd, trembled, and were gone.
 While the drift grew deeper, deeper,
 On the roofs and at the doors,
 While the wind awoke each sleeper
 With its melancholy roars.
 Once the Moon looked out, and lo!
 Blind against her face the Snow
 Like a wild white grave-cloth lay,
 Till she shuddering crept away.
 Then thro' darkness like the grave,
 On and on the legions drave.

.
 ROBERT WILLIAMS BUCHANAN.

A DECEMBER NIGHT.

LISTEN!—the wind is crying, like a loon
 On some far water, and the rising moon
 Stands breathless on the snow! That wind!—it
 seems
 A lost soul crying out in holy dreams,
 The cry of some long unappeased despair
 That has no human tongue—a soul in the air!
 The flame drops into ember-breathing gloom;
 Glimmers of shadow walk around the room,
 Great shapeless shapes, a shuddering moment plain,
 As the flame drops, then vanishing again!

JOHN JAMES PIATT.

SONG.

BLACK, leafless thorn, that erewhile bore the rose,
Long is the year, but short the time of flowers ;
Dreams the sad life that hides beneath the snows
Of joys that sped those all too-fleeting hours,

When sunbeams kissed your roses' lips apart,
When sighs still hovered near, and healing dew
Stole in where love had laid too bare the heart,
And all things seemed more glad and sweet for
you ?

Gone is the gracious morn that knew no morrow,
Long seems the winter day, long is the night ;
And yet who would not brave the life-long sorrow
That expiates such moments of delight !

MRS. EMILY [DAVIS] PFEIFFER.

WINTER.

How large that thrush looks on the bare thorn-tree !
A swarm of such, three little months ago,
Had hidden in the leaves and let none know
Save by the outburst of their minstrelsy.
A white flake here and there — a snow lily
Of last night's frost — our naked flower-beds hold ;
And for a rose-flower on the darkling mould
The hungry redbreast gleams. No bloom, no bee.

The current shudders to its ice-bound sedge :
 Nipped in their bath, the stark reeds one by one
 Flash each its clinging diamond in the sun :
 'Neath winds which for this Winter's sovereign
 pledge
 Shall curb great king-masts to the ocean's edge
 And leave memorial forest-kings o'erthrown.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

BALLADE TO THEOCRITUS, IN WINTER.

ἔσορῶν τὰν Σικελὸν ἐς ἅλα.

Id. viii. 56.

ΑΗ! leave the smoke, the wealth, the roar
 Of London, and the bustling street,
 For still, by the Sicilian shore,
 The murmur of the Muse is sweet.
 Still, still, the suns of summer greet
 The mountain-grave of Helikê,
 And shepherds still their songs repeat
 Where breaks the blue Sicilian sea.

What though they worship Pan no more,
 That guarded once the shepherd's seat,
 They chatter of their rustic lore,
 They watch the wind among the wheat :
 Cicalas chirp, the young lambs bleat,
 Where whispers pine to cypress tree ;
 They count the waves that idly beat
 Where breaks the blue Sicilian sea,

Theocritus ! thou canst restore
The pleasant years, and over-fleet ;
With thee we live as men of yore,
We rest where running waters meet :
And then we turn unwilling feet
And seek the world — so must it be —
We may not linger in the heat
Where breaks the blue Sicilian sea !

ENVOY.

Master, — when rain, and snow, and sleet
And northern winds are wild, to thee
We come, we rest in thy retreat,
Where breaks the blue Sicilian sea !

ANDREW LANG.

DECEMBER AND JUNE.

It was but the wild waves playing,
It was but the wild wind's roar ;
It was but a pale maid straying
Alone by the wreck-strewn shore.

It was but a day of December,
That followed a day of June ;
But to spirits that can remember,
What a wail in the words, "'Tis done !"

The dream is broken and faded,
The glory departed and flown ;

And to hearts once loving as they did,
'Tis death to live on alone !

O Sea, that her lover art hiding !
O wave, with thy dirge-like tune !
There's a fathomless gulf dividing
A day of December and June.

B.

London Spectator.

IN WINTER.

THE summer passed, the autumn came ;
The world swung over toward the night ;
The forests robed themselves in flame,
Then faded slowly into white ;
And set within a crystal frame

Of frozen streams, the shaggy boles
Of oak and elm, with leafless crowns,
Were painted stark upon the knolls ;
And cots and villages and towns

In tawny red, or strove in vain
To shame the white in which they stood.
The fairest tint was but a stain
Upon the snow, that quenched the wood,
And paved the street, and draped the plain.

JOSIAH GILBERT HOLLAND.

A WINTER SONG.

CRACKLE and blaze,
Crackle and blaze,

There's snow on the housetops; there's ice on the
ways;

But the keener the season
The stronger's the reason

Our ceiling should flicker and glow in thy blaze.

So fire — piled fire,
Leap, fire, and shout;
Be it warmer within
As 'tis colder without,

And as curtains we draw and around the hearth
close,

As we glad us with talk of great frosts and deep
snows,

As redly thy warmth on the shadowed wall plays,
We'll say Winter's evenings outmatch Summer's
'days,

And a song, jolly roarer, we'll shout in thy praise;
So crackle and blaze,
Crackle and blaze,

While roaring the chorus goes round in thy praise.

Crackle and blaze,
Crackle and blaze,

There's ice on the ponds; there are leaves on the
ways,

But the barer each tree
The more reason have we
To joy in the summer that roars in thy blaze.
So fire, piled fire,
The lustier shout
The louder winds shriek
And roar by without,
And, as, red through the curtains, go out with thy
light
Pleasant thoughts of warm firesides across the dark
night,
Passers by, hastening on, shall be loud in thy praise;
And while spark with red spark in thy curling smoke
plays;
Within, the loud song to thy honor we'll raise.
So crackle and blaze,
Crackle and blaze,
While roaring the chorus goes round in thy praise.
WILLIAM COX BENNETT.

DECEMBER.

BLOW, northern winds !
To brace my fibres, knit my cords,
To gird my soul, to fire my words,
To do my work, — for 'tis the Lord's, —
To fashion minds.

Come, tonic blasts !
Arouse my courage, stir my thought,
Give nerve and spring, that as I ought
I give my strength to what is wrought,
While duty lasts.

Glow, arctic light !
And let my heart, like burnished steel,
That bright, magnetic flame reveal
Which kindles purpose, faith, and zeal
For truth and right.

Shine, winter skies !
That when each brave day's work is done,
I wait in peace, from sun to sun,
To meet unshamed through victory won,
Your starry eyes.

MRS. LOUISA PARSONS [STONE] HOPKINS.

THE WALKER OF THE SNOW.

SPEED on, speed on, good master !
The camp lies far away ; —
We must cross the haunted valley
Before the close of day.

How the snow-blight came upon me
I will tell you as we go, —

The blight of the shadow hunter
Who walks the midnight snow.

To the cold December heaven
Came the pale moon and the stars,
As the yellow sun was sinking
Behind the purple bars.

The snow was deeply drifted
Upon the ridges drear
That lay for miles between me
And the camp for which we steer.

'Twas silent on the hill-side,
And by the solemn wood
No sound of life or motion
To break the solitude,

Save the wailing of the moose-bird
With a plaintive note and low,
And the skating of the red leaf
Upon the frozen snow.

And said I, — "Though dark is falling,
And far the camp must be,
Yet my heart it would be lightsome,
If I had but company."

And then I sang and shouted,
Keeping measure, as I sped,

To the harp-twang of the snow-shoe
As it sprang beneath my tread.

Not far into the valley
Had I dipped upon my way,
When a dusky figure joined me,
In a capuchin of gray,

Bending upon the snow-shoes
With a long and limber stride ;
And I hailed the dusky stranger,
As we travelled side by side,

But no token of communion
Gave he by word or look,
And the fear-chill fell upon me
At the crossing of the brook.

For I saw by the sickly moonlight,
As I followed, bending low,
That the walking of the stranger
Left no foot-marks on the snow.

Then the fear-chill gathered o'er me,
Like a shroud around me cast,
As I sank upon the snow-drift
Where the shadow hunter passed.

And the otter-trappers found me,
Before the break of day,

With my dark hair blanched and whitened
As the snow in which I lay.

But they spoke not, as they raised me ;
For they knew that in the night
I had seen the shadow hunter,
And had withered in his blight.

Sancta Maria speed us !
The sun is falling low, —
Before us lies the Valley
Of the Walker of the Snow !

CHARLES DAWSON SHANLY.

IN WINTER.

Now, from off the ashy stone
The chilly midnight cricket crieth,
And all merry birds are flown,
And our dream of pleasure dieth ;
Now the once blue, laughing sky
Saddens into gray,
And the frozen river's sigh,
Pining all away !

*Now, how solemn are the times !
The Winter times ! the Night times !*

BRYAN WALLER PROCTER.

DECEMBER.

THE beech is bare, and bare the ash,
The thickets white below ;
The fir-tree scowls with hoar moustache,
He cannot sing for snow.

The body-guard of veteran pines,
A grim battalion, stands ;
They ground their arms, in ordered lines,
For Winter so commands.

The waves are dumb along the shore,
The river's pulse is still ;
The north-wind's bugle blows no more
Reveill  from the hill.

The rustling sift of falling snow,
The muffled crush of leaves,
These are the sounds suppressed, that show
How much the forest grieves.

But, as the blind and vacant Day
Crawls to his ashy bed,
I hear dull echoes far away,
Like drums above the dead.

Sigh with me, Pine that never changed !
Thou wear'st the Summer's hue ;
Her other loves are all estranged,
But thou and I are true !

BAYARD TAYLOR.

THE YEAR.

THE crocus, while the days are dark,
 Unfolds its saffron sheen ;
 At April's touch, the crudest bark
 Discovers gems of green.

Then sleep the seasons, full of might ;
 While slowly swells the pod
 And rounds the peach, and in the night
 The mushroom bursts the sod.

The Winter falls ; the frozen rut
 Is bound with silver bars ;
 The snow-drift heaps against the hut,
 And night is pierced with stars.

COVENTRY KEARSEY DIGHTON PATMORE.

A NOCTURNAL UPON SAINT LUCIE'S DAY.

(BEING THE SHORTEST DAY.)

'Tis the year's midnight, and 'tis the day's,
 Lucie's who scarce seven hours herself unmasks ;
 The Sun is spent, and now his flasks
 Send forth light squibs, no constant rays ;
 The whole world's sap is sunk ;
 The general balm th' hydroptic earth hath drunk,
 Whither, as to the bed's-feet, life is shrunk,
 Dead and interr'd ; yet all these seem to laugh,
 Compared with me, who am their epitaph.

.

JOHN DONNE.

THE WINTER SOLSTICE MDCCXL.

THE radiant ruler of the year
At length his wintry goal attains,
Soon to reverse the long career,
And northward bend his steady reins.
Now piercing half Potosi's height
Prone rush the fiery floods of light,
Rip'ning the mountain's silver stores,
While in some cavern's horrid shade
The panting Indian hides his head,
And oft th' approach of eve implores.
But lo! on this deserted coast
How pale the sun, how thick the air!
Must'ring his storms, a sordid host!
Lo! Winter desolates the year.
The fields resign their latest bloom,
No more their breezes waft perfume,
No more the streams in music roll,
But snows fall dark or rains resound,
And while great Nature mourns around
Her griefs infect the human soul.

.

MARK AKENSIDE.

SOLSTICE.

IN the month of December, when, naked and keen,
The tree tops thrust at the snow-cloud gray,
And frozen tears fill the lids of day;
When only the thorn of the rose is seen,
Then, in heavy teen, each breath between,
We sigh, "Would the winter were well away!"
Whatever the sun and the dial say,
This is the longest day!

EDITH MATILDA THOMAS.

EPIGÆA ASLEEP.

ARBUTUS lies beneath the snows,
While Winter waits her brief repose,
And says, "No fairer flower grows!"

Of sunny April days she dreams,
Of robins' notes and murmuring streams,
And smiling in her sleep she seems.

She thinks her rosy buds expand
Beneath the touch of childhood's hand,
And beauty breathes throughout the land.

The arching elders bending o'er
The silent river's sandy shore,
Their golden tresses trim once more.

The pussy-willows in their play
Their varnished caps have flung away,
And hung their furs on every spray.

The toads their cheery music chant,
The squirrel seeks his summer haunt,
And life revives in every plant.

"I must awake! I hear the bee!
The butterfly I long to see!
The buds are bursting on the tree!"

Ah! blossom, thou art dreaming, dear,
The wild winds howl about thee here,
—The dirges of the dying year!

Thy gentle eyes with tears are wet;
In sweeter sleep these pains forget;
The merry morning comes not yet!

WILLIAM WHITMAN BAILEY.

IN DECEMBER.

SHEATHED is the river as it glideth by,
Frost-pearled are all the boughs in forests old,
The sheep are huddling close upon the wold,
And over them the stars tremble on high.
Pure joys these winter nights around me lie;
'Tis fine to loiter through the lighted street

At Christmas time, and guess from brow and pace

The doom and history of each one we meet,
What kind of heart beats in each dusky case ;
Whiles startled by the beauty of a face

In a shop-light a moment. Or instead,
To dream of silent fields where calm and deep
The sunshine lieth like a golden sleep —

Recalling sweetest looks of Summers dead.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

DECEMBER. \

WHITE month — whose stars fall showering from the
skies,

Turning to snowflakes in the frosty air —

We love thee, not alone that thou art fair,
Shining upon us with innumerable eyes
Of earth as heaven ; since, too, under lies

A milky way — holding within its snare

The Summer's Flora, folded now with care,
And brimming with new stars for Spring's surprise !
But, also 'tis, that one supremest star —

The star that taught the shepherds best to sing

And by its watchful, holy ministering,

Led unto truth the wise men from afar —

Concentres its rare brightness in thy zone,

And makes the Child-King ours ; our very own !

MRS. MARY BARKER DODGE.

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

THE time draws near the birth of Christ :
The moon is hid ; the night is still ;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound :

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and good-will, good-will and peace,
Peace and good-will, to all mankind.

ALFRED TENNYSON,
In Memoriam.

CHRISTMAS EVE, 1836.

THE earth is clad
For her bridal glad ;
Her robe is white
As the spotless light ;
O'er field and hill
Its folds are still.

From her aery throne
The moon looks down,

Clothing with glory
The tree-tops hoary,
Which glittering are
Like purest spar.

A star or two
Diamond-blue
Through the space peers
Where the vapor clears,
And in long white masses
Silently passes.

The wind is awake,
And his voice doth shake
The frost from the trees ;
Then by degrees
Swells with a louder sound,
Till it dies on the level ground.

HENRY ALFORD.

A CHRISTMAS HYMN.

It was the calm and silent night !

Seven hundred years and fifty-three

Had Rome been growing up to might,

And now was queen of land and sea.

No sound was heard of clashing wars —

Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain :

Apollo, Pallas, Jove, and Mars
Held undisturbed their ancient reign,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago.

'Twas in the calm and silent night !
The senator of haughty Rome,
Impatient, urged his chariot's flight,
From lordly revel rolling home ;
Triumphal arches, gleaming, swell
His breast with thoughts of boundless sway ;
What recked the Roman what befell
A paltry province far away,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago ?

Within that province far away
Went plodding home a weary boor ;
A streak of light before him lay,
Fallen through a half-shut stable-door
Across his path. He passed — for naught
Told what was going on within ;
How keen the stars, his only thought —
The air how calm, and cold, and thin,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago !

Oh, strange indifference ! low and high
Drowsed over common joys and cares ;
The earth was still — but knew not why
The world was listening, unawares.

How calm a moment may precede
 One that shall thrill the world for ever !
 To that still moment, none would heed,
 Man's doom was linked no more to sever —
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago !

It is the calm and solemn night :
 A thousand bells ring out, and throw
 Their joyous peals abroad, and smite
 The darkness — charmed and holy now !
 The night that erst no name had worn,
 To it a happy name is given ;
 For in that stable lay, new-born,
 The peaceful prince of earth and heaven,
 In the solemn midnight,
 Centuries ago !

ALFRED DOMETT.

CHRISTMAS TIDE.

HEAP on more wood ! — the wind is chill ;
 But let it whistle as it will,
 We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
 Each age has deemed the new-born year
 The fittest time for festal cheer :

.
 And well our Christian sires of old
 Loved when the year its course had rolled,

And brought blithe Christmas back again
With all his hospitable train.

Domestic and religious rite

Gave honor to the holy night;

On Christmas eve the bells were rung,

On Christmas eve the mass was sung:

.

England was merry England when

Old Christmas brought his sports again.

'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale,

'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;

A Christmas gambol oft could cheer

The poor man's heart through half the year.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE MAHOGANY-TREE.

CHRISTMAS is here :

Winds whistle shrill

Icy and chill,

Little care we :

Little we fear

Weather without,

Sheltered about

The Mahogany-tree.

Once on the boughs,

Birds of rare plume

Sang in its bloom ;

Night-birds are we :

Here we carouse,

Singing like them,

Perched round the stem

Of the jolly old tree.

Here let us sport,

Boys, as we sit ;

Laughter and wit

Flashing so free.

Life is but short —
 When we are gone,
 Let them sing on,
 Round the old tree.

Evenings we knew,
 Happy as this ;
 Kind hearts and true,
 Faces we miss,
 Pleasant to see.
 Gentle and just,
 Peace to your dust !
 We sing round the tree.

Care, like a dun,
 Lurks at the gate ;
 Let the dog wait ;
 Happy we'll be !
 Drink, every one ;
 Pile up the coals,

Fill the red bowls,
 Round the old tree !

Drain we the cup. —
 Friend, art afraid ?
 Spirits are laid
 In the Red Sea.
 Mantle it up ;
 Empty it yet ;
 Let us forget,
 Round the old tree.

Sorrows, begone !
 Life and its ills
 Duns and their bills,
 Bid we to flee.
 Come with the dawn,
 Blue-devil sprite,
 Leave us to night,
 Round the old tree.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.

CHRISTMAS ROSES.

PALE winter roses, the white ghosts
 Of our June roses,
 Last beauty that the Old Year boasts,
 Ere his reign closes !

I gather you, as farewell gift
From parting lover,
For ere you fade, his moments swift
Will all be over.

Kind ghosts ye are, that trouble not,
Nor fright, nor sadden,
But wake fond memories half-forgot,
And thoughts that gladden.

O changeless Past ! I would the year
Left of lost hours
No ghosts that brought more shame or fear,
Than these white flowers !

R. I. O.

London Spectator, December 20, 1879

CHRISTMAS VIOLETS.

LAST night I found the violets
You sent me once across the sea ;
From gardens that the winter frets,
In summer lands they came to me.

Still fragrant of the English earth,
Still hurried from the frozen dew,
To me they spoke of Christmas mirth,
They spoke of England, spoke of you.

The flowers are scentless, black, and sere,
The perfume long has passed away ;
The sea whose tides are year by year
Is set between us, chill and gray.

But you have reached a windless age,
The haven of a happy clime ;
You do not dread the winter's rage,
Although we missed the summer-time.

And like the flower's breath over sea,
Across the gulf of time and pain,
To night returns the memory
Of love that lived not all in vain.

ANDREW LANG.

THE CHRISTMAS SNOW.

SEE what a pure, soft robe hath Nature spread
About the living and above the dead,
Wrapping us all within its ample folds !
And while I think of the dear dead it holds
So close to me alive, I hardly know
How not to greet them through the whispering snow,
But feel the Christmas greetings passing there,
Like snowflakes floating in the peaceful air.

We who, to-day, are thinking of our dead,
How deep the snows are lying o'er their head,

How dimly we may dream them near, or see
The meaning of their silent mystery,
Too faintly still we whisper through our grief :
“ Lord, I believe ; help thou my unbelief ! ”
Too deaf our ears to their still yearning voice, —
“ As thou hast loved me, so wilt thou rejoice ! ”

Yes, we who keep the festival to-day
With sadness that we cannot drive away,
Let us be happy, too, and inly sing
Like birds from empty nests but on the wing
To fairer climes, who, as they sing and fly,
Feel warmer breezes ever drawing nigh,
See summer skies as swifter on they roam,
And know that just before is peace, and rest, and
home.

MRS. LOUISA PARSONS [STONE] HOPKINS.

CHRISTMAS GUESTS.

THE quiet day in winter beauty closes,
And sunset clouds are tinged with crimson dye,
As if the blushes of our faded roses
Came back to tint this sombre Christmas sky.

A lonely crow floats o'er the upland ranges,
A robin carols from the chestnut-tree ;

The voice that changes not amid our changes
Sounds faintly from the melancholy sea.

We sit and watch the twilight darken slowly,
Dies the last gleam upon the lone hill-side,
And in the stillness, growing deep and holy,
Our Christmas guests come in this eventide.

They enter softly : some with baby faces,
Whose sweet blue eyes have scarcely looked on
life ;
We bid them welcome to their vacant places ;
They won the peace, and never knew the strife.

And some with steadfast glances meet us gravely,
Their hands point backward to the paths they
trod ;
Dear ones, we know how long ye struggled bravely,
And died upon the battle-field of God !

And some are here whose patient souls were riven
By our hard words, and looks of cold disdain ;
Ah, loving hearts, to speak of wrong forgiven,
Ye come to visit our dark world again !

But One there is, more kind than any other,
Whose presence fills the silent house with light ;
The Prince of Peace, our gracious Elder Brother
Comes to His birthday feast with us to-night.

Thou who wast born and cradled in a manger
Hast gladdened our poor earth with hope and rest ;
O best Belovéd, come not as a stranger,
But tarry, Lord, our Friend and Christmas guest.

SARAH DOUDNEY.

BLOW, BLOW, THOU WINTER WIND.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude ;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh-ho ! sing, heigh-ho ! unto the green holly ;
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly :
Then, heigh-ho, the holly !
This life is most jolly !

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh,
As benefits forgot :
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not.

Heigh-ho ! sing, heigh-ho ! unto the green holly ;
Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly :
Then, heigh-ho, the holly !
This life is most jolly !

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

WINTER.

O WINTER, ruler of the inverted year,
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapped in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way,
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art !

WILLIAM COWPER.

THE CLOSING YEAR.

FASTER than petals fall on windy days
From ruined roses,
Hope after hope falls fluttering, and decays,
Ere the year closes.

For little hopes, that open but to die,
And little pleasures,
Divide the long, sad year, that labors by,
Into short measures.

Yea, let them go ! our day-lived hopes are not
The life we cherish ;
Love lives, till disappointments are forgot,
And sorrows perish.

On withered boughs, where still the old leaf clings,
New leaves come never ;
And in the heart, where hope hangs faded, springs
No new endeavor.

FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON.

THE FAREWELL OF THE OLD YEAR.

WHEN the moments of friendship are numbered,
How oft it appears
That the love which in laughter has slumbered
Awakes now in tears !

We are friends that have journeyed together
Long time, you and I ;
Through sunshine and stormiest weather,
But the Old Year must die.

And awhile in your hearts will awaken
A bitter regret ;
And the paths that your feet have forsaken
You cannot forget.

Yet I pray you to mourn not my going,
Though we have been friends ;
What am I but one billow, whose flowing
Has touched shore and ends ?

And the tale of my joy and my sorrow
Lives but as the trace
Of the waves, that the tides of the morrow
In turn shall efface.

Yet I leave you, as waves leave their treasures
Of coral and shell,
A gift, passing sorrows and pleasures,
Our friendship to tell.

I leave you the friendships, whose growing
Has been from my birth ;
There is naught that the tide brings in flowing
Can equal their worth.

For as shells from the murmurs of ocean
Steal echoes that last,
So in friendship is stirred the emotion
Of years that are past.

FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON.

THE DEPARTING YEAR.

He came, he brought us meadow-bloom and grasses,
And bird-songs caroling the heavens through ;
Now not a green blade flutters as he passes,
Nor stays one thrush to hymn a sweet adieu.

Dry, rattling stalks and clumps of frozen rushes
Are all that tremble to his parting tread;
From cottage windows where the home-light flushes
No face looks out, no last farewell is said.

Bare are the walls where blushed his garden roses,
And bare the tree-boughs swaying o'er the lawn;
The grape-hung lattice not a leaf discloses,
And no late watcher sighs that he is gone:—

Gone with the beauty of the summer morning,
The dreamy loveliness of vanished days,
The sky's soft glory and the earth's adorning,
June's rosy light and Autumn's mellow haze.

I begged, when first he shone with lavish splendor,
A prince triumphant come to rule his own,
That he some token of his grace would render
To me, a suppliant, on his bounty thrown.

He bent and proffered, without stint or measure,
The utmost that my daring words could crave;
With full arms closing round each hoarded treasure
My lips forgot to bless the hand that gave.

He made the evening glad, the sunrise golden,
And all existence richer that he came;
Yet scarcely finds my spirit thus beholden,
The time to weave this chaplet to his name.

O kingly giver, old and unattended,
The world's poor gratitude is not for thee ;
It leaves unsung the reign so nearly ended,
And turns to hail the king that is to be.

MRS. ABBA [GOOLD] WOOLSON.

FAREWELL TO THE OLD YEAR.

FAREWELL, old year ; we walk no more together ;
I catch the sweetness of thy latest sigh,
And, crowned with yellow brake and withered
heather,
I see thee stand beneath this cloudy sky.

Here in the dim light of a grey December,
We part in smiles, and yet we met in tears ;
Watching thy chilly dawn, I well remember
I thought thee saddest-born of all the years.

I knew not then what precious gifts were hidden
Under the mist that veiled thy path from sight ;
I knew not then that joy would come unbidden,
To make thy closing hours divinely bright.

I only saw the dreary clouds unbroken,
I only heard the splash of icy rain,
And in that winter gloom I found no token.
To tell me that the sun would shine again.

Oh, dear old year, I wronged a Father's kindness,
 I would not trust him with my load of care ;
 I stumbled on in weariness and blindness,
 And lo, he blessed me with an answered prayer !

Good-bye, kind year, we walk no more together,
 But here in quiet happiness we part ;
 And from thy wreath of faded fern and heather
 I take some sprays, and wear them on my heart.
 SARAH DOUDNEY.

OLD AND NEW.

WHERE are they hidden, all the vanished years ?
 Ah, who can say ?
 Where is the laughter flown to, and the tears ?
 Perished ? Ah, nay !
 Beauty and strength are born of sun and showers ;
 Shall *these* not surely spring again in flowers ?

Yet let them sleep, nor seek nerein to wed
 Effect to cause ;
 For Nature's subtlest influences spread
 By viewless laws.
 This only seek, that each New Year may bring
 Out of new gifts a fairer, softer Spring !
 FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON.

OCCIDENTE.

How coldly sets this winter sun —
The bitter day is wellnigh done ;
Forlorn December fares, with one
 Sad smile of last regret.
Thus from thy brief and wintry day,
O Soul ! the sunshine ebbs away :
Thus falls on thee the frozen ray,
 That lingers wanly yet :
Thus dies — how fringed with icy gold,
The clouds above yon mountain rolled !
Behind whose summit, dark and cold,
 This winter sun has set.

HENRY HOWARD BROWNELL.

THE OLD YEAR.

AN old man stands at a tavern door,
His feeble hands are withered and poor ;
He looks afar, through sleet and snow,
But there's never a star to see him go.

With tearful eye at the door he waits,
And with many a sigh he hesitates ;
For well he knows, when he leaves that door,
'Tis for aye he goes, and he comes no more.

There's many a light in the tavern halls,
And the wine is bright, and the music falls ;
For a welcome guest is expected soon,
And he comes on the crest of the rising moon.

He comes ! and the bells ring out glad notes,
And the welcome swells from their brazen throats ;
While the waif, cast free to the sleet and snow,
Cries, " You rang for me just a year ago ! "

'Tis the way of all breath since the world began ;
'Tis the shadow of death on the heart of man ;
For nothing will hold, and nothing is true :
" It's off with the old, and it's on with the new. "

T. T. BURTON WOLLASTON.

THE DEAD YEAR.

THE ivy over-shines the wall,
Her purple poison berries shed ;
Ash-clusters blacken to their fall :
The year is dead !

A fleck of amber, in the cloud
That swathes the east, is dawn and light !
And day, that gloom and mist enshroud,
Makes welcome night.

As one who, seeing life depart,
Ponders the wonder of our lives,
So, at the dead year's feet, my heart
Strange thought revives.

I think of one, a blossom set
Shining amid the snows of years;
Sweet in remembrance, in regret,
Even in tears.

I see the bright rose of her face
Flushed with the tender flush of youth,
And murmur, amorous of its grace,
Blue eyes for truth :

Blue eyes — the summer sky less blue —
They were my rapture, my despair;
I knew them bright, and felt them true,
Blue eyes that were !

Again I watch the cloud that lends
The future all its rainbow dyes;
Again its veil the Phantom rends
And rapture flies.

The anguish of each winter day
Comes back into my heart anew;
The charms death could not steal away
Once more I view.

And in the wailing of the winds,
 The moan of branches swaying bare,
 Again my soul re-echoed finds
 Its own despair.

The ivy over-shines the wall,
 The berries of the ash are shed;
 Under the holly's coronal
 The year lies dead!

Littell's Living Age, January 22, 1870.

FAREWELL TO DECEMBER.

OLD December!
 Art thou gone? — then fare thee well!
 Many a good do I remember
 Of thee, that I fain would tell;
 Many a dream beyond all trouble;
 Many a feast where beer did bubble;
 Many a jolly beauty toasted;
 Many a mighty turkey roasted;
 Laughing, quaffing, blusterous weather,
 (Winds and rain, a song together);
 Friendship glowing — wine a-flowing,
 Wit, beyond the proser's knowing!
 Ah, December!
 I remember
 Thee and thine, perhaps too well.

.

For these reasons, old December!

(For these reasons, and some more
Which I do not now remember),
I'll still love thee, as of yore.

Now, farewell! and for *my* sake,

Bid thy fellow Months be kind,
And not a merry Spirit take,
Nor one of true and gentle mind.

In requital, — Friends, remember!

We will all assemble round,
When next the winter strews the ground,
And drink a health to old December!

BRYAN WALLER PROCTER.

DECEMBER.

DEAD lonely night and all streets quiet now,
Thin o'er the moon the hindmost cloud swims past
Of that great rack that brought us up the snow;
On earth strange shadows o'er the snow are cast;
Pale stars, bright moon, swift cloud, make heaven so
vast

That earth left silent by the wind of night
Seems shrunk 'neath the gray unmeasured height.

Ah! through the hush the looked-for midnight
clangs!

And then, e'en while its last stroke's solemn drone

In the cold air by unlit windows hangs,
Out break the bells above the year foredone,
Change, kindness lost, love left unloved alone ;
Till their despairing sweetness makes thee deem
Thou once wert loved, if but amidst a dream.

O thou who clingest still to life and love,
Though nought of good, no God thou mayst discern,
Though nought that is, thine utmost woe can move,
Though no soul knows wherewith thine heart doth
yearn,
Yet, since thy weary lips no curse can learn,
Cast no least thing thou lovedst once away,
Since yet perchance thine eyes shall see the day.

WILLIAM MORRIS,
The Earthly Paradise

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

FULL knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sighing :
Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying.
Old year, you must not die ;
You came to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old year, you shall not die.

He lieth still : he doth not move :
 He will not see the dawn of day.
 He hath no other life above.
 He gave me a friend, and a true true-love,
 And the New-year will take 'em away.

Old year, you must not go ;
 So long as you have been with us,
 Such joy as you have seen with us,
 Old year, you shall not go.

He froth'd his bumpers to the brim ;
 A jollier year we shall not see.
 But tho' his eyes are waxing dim,
 And tho' his foes speak ill of him,
 He was a friend to me.

Old year, you shall not die ;
 We did so laugh and cry with you,
 I've half a mind to die with you,
 Old year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,
 But all his merry quips are o'er,
 To see him die, across the waste
 His son and heir doth ride post-haste,
 But he'll be dead before.

Every one for his own.
 The night is starry and cold, my friend,
 And the New-year blithe and bold, my friend,
 Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes ! over the snow
I heard just now the crowing cock.
The shadows flicker to and fro :
The cricket chirps : the light burns low :
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.

Shake hands before you die.
Old year, we'll dearly rue for you :
What is it we can do for you ?
Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin.
Alack ! our friend is gone.
Close up his eyes : tie up his chin :
Step from the corpse, and let him in
That standeth there alone,
And waiteth at the door.
There's a new foot on the floor, my friend,
And a new face at the door, my friend,
A new face at the door.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

DIRGE FOR THE YEAR.

ORPHAN Hours, the Year is dead,
Come and sigh, come and weep !
Merry Hours, smile instead,
For the year is but asleep :
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

As an earthquake rocks a corse
 In its coffin in the clay,
 So white Winter, that rough nurse,
 Rocks the dead-cold Year to-day;
 Solemn Hours! wail aloud
 For your mother in her shroud.

As the wild air stirs and sways
 The tree-swung cradle of a child,
 So the breath of these rude days
 Rocks the Year. Be calm and mild,
 Trembling Hours; she will arise
 With new love within her eyes.

.
 PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

OLD YEAR'S NIGHT.

I.

THE windy trouble of the western sky
 Has all died out, save one long line of fire.
 And hark! the breeding North sweeps sadly by
 And moans about the poplar's gusty spire.

II.

No snow to-night. This pitiless wind alone
 Betwixt the poor pinched earth and callous sky.
 "Old Year," it cries, shrill mockery in its tone;
 "I come to see the grizzly old year die!"

III.

O, bitter cold ! beneath dark cottage-eaves
 The icicles drip slowly into length.
 In empty woods black corpses of dead leaves
 Curl up with torture of the winter's strength.

IV.

"Old year, 'old year, the night flies on apace :
 Impatient waits the new-called king without,
 Take up thy mantle, hide thy wrinkled face ;
 What lags the weak, despised old year about ?"

* * * * *

V.

Hark, midnight chimes ! The weary eyelids close
 Faint sounds his death-knell as the sea in shells :
 The old year dies with all his wounds and woes ;
 The new year comes with heedless ring of bells.

Tinsley's Magazine, December, 1869.

THE DEATH OF THE YEAR.

WASTED and broken by December days,
 Dying the Old Year lay :
 Upon his brow the firelight's ruddy blaze
 Painted a mock of health with crimson rays
 In weird, fantastic play —

A mock of health ; for his last sun
Had set,
And his last hour begun ;
And what of life was lingering yet
Seemed rather a vague dream of what had been
Than a reality.

Upon his face in deep, expressive lines was seen
Each flash of memory
As early days came back to him ;
Glad infancy
And youth with lusty limb
And lustier heart to do, to hope, to dare.
Before his eyes were strangely pictured there
In changeful visionings
Springtime's imaginings —
Fulfilled ? — Alas ! the hopes youth brings
To the fresh heart and the sweet songs it sings
Of happiness
Are but the flush that its own beauty flings
On life.

.

Now on the Old-Year's face
The struggle grew apace
As life's o'erwearied race
Drew near an end ;
And fantasies
With memories
Were seen to blend.

“Where are my hours?” he cried,
“Have they all left my side?
My golden hours! my warrior hours!—

.
These still obedient on me wait;
Nor this last hour of life too late
To launch the bolt of adverse fate,
And fairest hopes to desolate!

“But no;
I will not, like a tyrant, go;
But peacefully resign
The sceptre that is mine
To him
Whose reign will soon begin.
Already at the gate he cries
For entrance; and the Old-Year dies
As the New-Year comes in.”

WILLIAM LEIGHTON.

THE CLOSING YEAR.

’Tis midnight’s holy hour—and silence now
Is brooding, like a gentle spirit, o’er
The still and pulseless world. Hark! on the winds
The bells’ deep notes are swelling. ’Tis the knell
Of the departed Year.

No funeral train
Is sweeping past; yet on the stream and wood,

With melancholy light, the moonbeams rest,
Like a pale, spotless shroud ; the air is stirred,
As by a mourner's sigh ; and on yon cloud,
That floats so still and placidly through heaven,
The spirits of the seasons seem to stand —
Young Spring, bright Summer, Autumn's solemn
form,
And Winter with his aged locks — and breathe
In mournful cadences, that come abroad
Like the far wind-harp's wild and touching wail,
A melancholy dirge o'er the dead Year,
Gone from the earth forever.

'Tis a time
For memory and for tears. Within the deep,
Still chambers of the heart, a spectre dim,
Whose tones are like the wizard voice of Time,
Heard from the tomb of ages, points its cold
And solemn finger to the beautiful
And holy visions that have passed away
And left no shadow of their loveliness
On the dead waste of life. That spectre lifts
The coffin-lid of hope, and joy, and love,
And, bending mournfully above the pale
Sweet forms that slumber there, scatters dead flowers
O'er what has passed to nothingness.

The Year
Has gone, and, with it, many a glorious throng
Of happy dreams. Its mark is on each brow,
Its shadow in each heart. In its swift course,

It waved its sceptre o'er the beautiful,
And they are not. It laid its pallid hand
Upon the strong man, and the haughty form
Is fallen, and the flashing eye is dim.
It trod the hall of revelry, where thronged
The bright and joyous, and the tearful wail
Of stricken ones is heard, where erst the song
And reckless shout resounded. It passed o'er
The battle-plain, where sword and spear and shield
Flashed in the light of mid-day — and the strength
Of serried hosts is shivered, and the grass,
Green from the soil of carnage, waves above
The crushed and mouldering skeleton. It came
And faded like a wreath of mist at eve ;
Yet, ere it melted in the viewless air,
It heralded its millions to their home
In the dim land of dreams.

Remorseless Time ! —

Fierce spirit of the glass and scythe ! — what power
Can stay him in his silent course, or melt
His iron heart to pity ? On, still on
He presses, and forever. The proud bird,
The condor of the Andes, that can soar
Through heaven's unfathomable depths, or brave
The fury of the northern hurricane
And bathe his plumage in the thunder's home,
Furls his broad wings at nightfall, and sinks down
To rest upon his mountain-crag — but Time
Knows not the weight of sleep or weariness,
And night's deep darkness has no chain to bind

His rushing pinion. Revolutions sweep
O'er earth, like troubled visions o'er the breast
Of dreaming sorrow ; cities rise and sink,
Like bubbles on the water ; fiery isles
Spring, blazing, from the ocean, and go back
To their mysterious caverns ; mountains rear
To heaven their bald and blackened cliffs, and bow
Their tall heads to the plain ; new empires rise,
Gathering the strength of hoary centuries,
And rush down like the Alpine avalanche,
Startling the nations ; and the very stars,
Yon bright and burning blazonry of God,
Glitter awhile in their eternal depths,
And, like the Pleiad, loveliest of their train,
Shoot from their glorious spheres, and pass away,
To darkle in the trackless void : yet Time,
Time the tomb-builder, holds his fierce career,
Dark, stern, all-pitiless, and pauses not
Amid the mighty wrecks that strew his path,
To sit and muse, like other conquerors,
Upon the fearful ruin he has wrought.

GEORGE DENNISON PRENTICE.

NEW-YEAR'S EVE.

WITH a bottle and a friend
— Friend is Tom and bottle Sherry —
I shall now begin and end
This brief space where two years blend,
Wondrous wise and merry.

Never yet was there a woe
That had not a pleasure pressing
Close upon its heels ; and so
Through the Old and New we go,
Each at some time blessing.

Though the Old Year brought to me
Little joy and much of sorrow,
In the New I hope to be
Happier : my joys, you see,
Always come — to-morrow.

So, as New-Year's Eve doth end,
Tom, and I, and golden Sherry
— Finest wine and oldest friend —
Kill the space where two years blend,
Making wondrous merry.

GEORGE ARNOLD.

DIZAIN.

STORM-SHATTERED drifts of clouds are swiftly sailing
Across a sky that shows no gleam of star,
The wandering winds in unison are wailing
Down dark deserted forest depths afar :
The thundering billows beat upon the bar
Through long lone hours that drearily drag by :
Boding and dismal comes the owlet's cry, —
And lo ! as dies the desolate old year,
Soft snowflakes flutter from the frowning sky
And fall like blossoms on his icy bier.

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

THE OLD YEAR—DECEMBER, 1841.

THE midnight bells are trowling,
The wintry winds are howling,
The cliff-beat surge is growling
 In thunders far away;
And heaven and earth are sighing,
And drearily replying,
“The old year is a-dying,” —
 So, so they seem to say.

The angry clouds are driven
Across the scowling heaven,
In vain the stars have striven
 To show their shimmering light;
One broad and mighty shadow
Clothes stream and hill and meadow,
And weeded like a widow
 Droops down the gloomy night.

Across the pathway shooting,
The spectral owl goes hooting,
The yelping fox is footing
 His way along the moor;
Within the farmers' houses
The baying watch-dog rouses,
Then stretches down and drowzes,
 And dreams upon the floor.

The roosted cock, right early,
Sings out his summons cheerly,

And through the night air clearly
The shrill notes float away ;
And, o'er the common pealing
Comes many an answering feeling,
Till now like echo stealing
The distant sounds decay.

The ways with snows are blocking,
Against the casement knocking
The wind makes dismal mocking,
With gusty rise and fall ;
On creaking hinges hanging
The garden gate is banging,
And drearily are clanging
The windows one and all.

Through crannied hovels wheezing,
The bitter wind goes breezing,
Where lie old crones half freezing,
And dread, yet long for light ;
Within the rich man's chambers
Glow bright the cheerful embers,
And scarcely he remembers
How goes the fearful night.

Little children, all together,
Cling closer to each other,
Nor mind the wintry weather,
Within their bed so warm ;
The goodman has been praying,
The goodwife has been saying

“God help the traveler straying
In such a night of storm!”

Heap up the fire more cheerly, —
We'll hail the new year early,
The old one has gone fairly, —
A right good year and true!
We've had some pleasant rambles,
And merry Christmas gambols,
And roses with our brambles,
Adieu, old year, adieu!

Here comes the new year duly
We'll give him welcome truly
Come, mark the score up newly, —
Time flies apace away!
Let's meet him like a lover,
His brows with chaplets cover, —
Yet hold him for a rover,
Nor care to bid him stay!

GEORGE LUNT.

RING OUT, WILD BELLS.

RING out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow :
The year is going, let him go ;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more ;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor.
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife ;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times ;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite ;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE NEW YEAR.

A FLOWER unblown ; a Book unread ;
A Tree with fruit unharvested ;
A Path untrod ; a House whose rooms
Lack yet the heart's divine perfumes ;
A Landscape whose wide border lies
In silent shade 'neath silent skies ;
A wondrous Fountain yet unsealed ;
A Casket with its gifts concealed :—
This is the Year that for you waits,
Beyond To-morrow's mystic gates.

Oh may this Flower unfold to you
Visions of beauty sweet and new ;
This Book on golden pages trace
Your sacred joys and deeds of grace.
May all the fruit of this strange Tree
Luscious and rosy-tinted be ;
This Path through fields of knowledge go ;
This House with love's content o'erflow ;
This Landscape glitter with the dew

Of blessed hopes and friendships true ;
This Fountain's living crystal cheer,
As fail the springs that once were dear ;
This Casket with such gems be stored
As shine in lives that love the Lord.

HORATIO NELSON POWERS.



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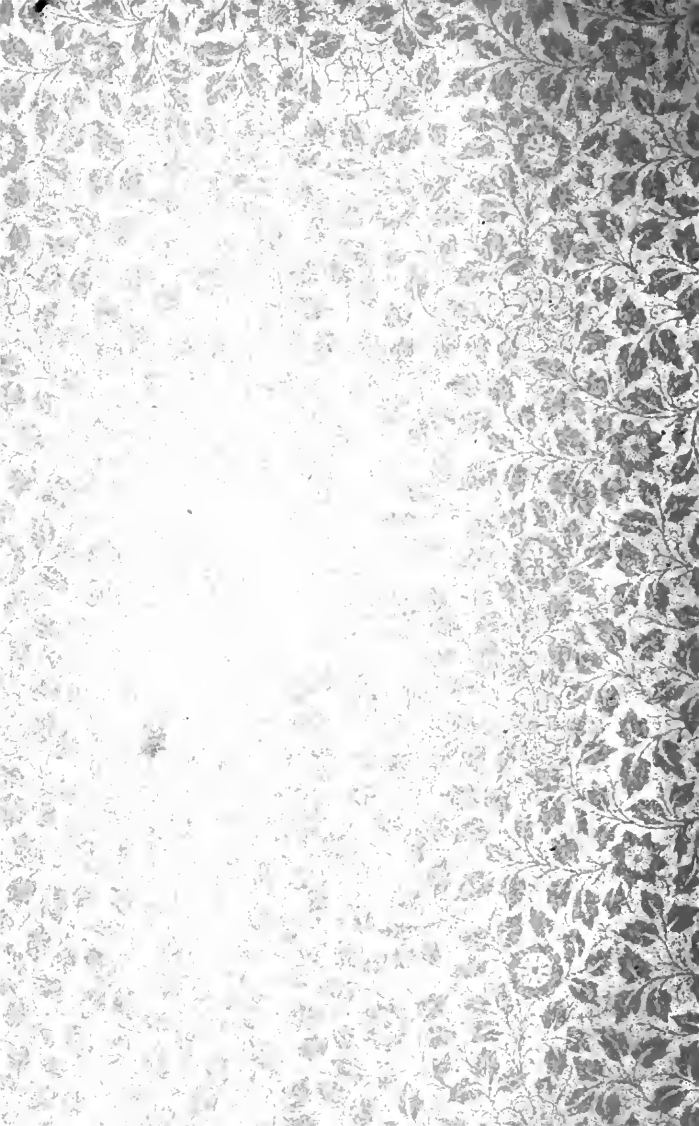
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